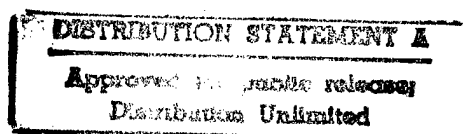


JPRS Report

East Asia

Southeast Asia
Vietnam: TAP CHI CONG SAN
No 7, July 1989



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Plurality and Pluralism

00000000 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 1-5

[Ha Xuan Truong; article not translated]

**The Bicentennial of the French Revolution—A
Manifestation of the Spirit of Humanism,
Democracy, and Peace**

00000000 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 6-10

[Article not translated]

The Great French Revolution and Modern Culture

00000000 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 11-15; 5

[Huy Can; article not translated]

Democratization and the Safeguarding of Human Rights in Our Country Today*902E0112A Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 16-20*

[Pham Ngoc Quang, associate professor of philosophy]

[Text] Democracy and human rights are the fruits of the struggle by progressive people and the development of human civilization. For many years now, democracy and human rights have been the targets of the struggle between socialism and capitalism and between the progressive forces and the reactionary forces. One of the goals of perfecting socialism today is to have more democracy and do things more for the people. This will affirm the superiority of socialism. Moreover, this will "manifest the human element and manifest the great awareness and creativity of every class of people in building and defending the new society."¹

Democratization in the economic, political, cultural, and spiritual spheres will bring about new developments concerning the nature of socialism and make it possible to implement the varied and abundant rights of man. Thus, guaranteeing human rights is both the target and motive force of socialist construction in general and of democratization in particular.

As an historical category, the themes of "human rights" change and evolve with the evolution of society. With the advances in the material and spiritual civilization of man, the human rights requirements also become more varied and abundant. But understanding and providing human rights do not move forward automatically in accord with the progress of material civilization. These are the products of the class struggle, initially the struggle of the bourgeois class against feudalism. Slave-holding states and feudal states have no concept of "human rights." Because in those systems, the fate of the slaves and peasants and everything that they enjoy depend on the whims of the slave owners and, more recently, the feudal kings. Everyone lived or died by the grace of the king. No one had the right to ask for anything.

The first bourgeois law affirmed that the right to life is the natural right of every individual. Man must be free. All people are equal in the sense that each person has the right to live and to determine his own fate. In the economic sphere, this translates as the right to be one's own master like a natural living organism. A person can sell his labor freely to any bourgeois. The reason why bourgeois law recognized this point and attributed to it the meaning of a natural reason was that that was the precondition for the existence of capital production formulas. Without free laborers to hire, there would not be any capitalist production. But along with this freedom, the laborers were dependent on the capitalists. As this dependence increased, so did the exploitation of the laborers and the class antagonism between the laborers and the capitalists. Because of this, the capitalist class grew more and more autocratic and violent. Violations of people's human rights became more and more

common, and the democratic nature of the bourgeois states began to decline. That is when democracy and human rights again became the target of struggle of the laboring people. The people struggled to have a more democratic state and to win greater human rights.

The mission of socialism is to do away with class antagonism and to enable every step in conquering nature and improving society to be a step forward by man in mastering both society and himself, that is, to manifest democracy and human rights more fully.

Implementing democracy and human rights has been restrained because of the nature of economic and social development and because of the class viewpoint and political system currently in effect. This also depends on the general cultural level, particularly the political culture of the masses. However, the elements of human rights bear the nature of a vast epoch. Because of this, even though things have been established by specific conditions, the epochal trend of human rights cannot be ignored.

In general, people are basically united in the struggle to implement democracy and human rights. For each individual, democracy is the political right of a mature people. For society, democracy is the condition for developing and guaranteeing the implementation of other human rights. In our society today, guaranteeing human rights requires that we expand democracy in the following spheres:

Politically: To ensure democracy in the various political spheres, such as holding elections, running for election, and selecting cadres, and in issuing decisions and implementing the decisions of the state.

Economically: To expand the right to control and participate in the economic life of the production and commercial installations subordinate to the various economic elements and to increase the ownership rights of the laborers at the economic bases.

Culturally: To guarantee the right to create and criticize, and to increase the civil responsibilities of artists.

Ideologically: To implement the people's right to be kept informed and to express ideas frankly.

Although there is unity on the basic elements, human rights cannot be converted into civil rights by the democratic mechanism. Even though the democratic rights of citizens are very important and even though they are a valuable element of human rights, they do not encompass all human rights. Because each individual has his own special living conditions and his own special psychological and physiological characteristics, he has his own specific needs in daily life that are different from those of others. Society must respect the needs of people and create the conditions to enable individuals to fulfill their needs. Naturally, with the credentials of rights guaranteed by law that are in accord with specific economic and social conditions, human rights must be

implemented fairly for all people. The implementation of human rights for one person must not harm the human rights of other people. That is the way to avoid creating conflicts. To do this, the state, social organizations, and each individual must manage things.

In conditions in which there is a multi-faceted economic structure and in a society in which there are many different social classes, human rights will manifest various forms, even opposing forms. But it would be a mistake to conclude that among these conflicting human rights requirements, there is only one that is right and that the others must be abolished. Such a viewpoint is too rigid and leads to both "leftist" and "rightist" mistakes (mostly leftist mistakes) as the past few years have shown.

In the present stage, the process of switching our economy from an administrative and state subsidies mechanism to a socialist commodity mechanism and transforming people into real consumers instead of people who passively accept state subsidies is also a process of gradually heightening and fulfilling the varied requirements concerning human rights and commodity consumption. On one hand, this satisfies the natural and social needs of man. On the other hand, this constantly increases needs and stimulates the development of production.

Men, with the credentials of social entities used to working, have the right to work and contribute their strength to society. That is a natural condition. Thus, society must create favorable conditions for everyone who wants to work and who is capable of working and benefiting society without regard to the person's economic element. Conversely, discrimination and unreasonable treatment will limit democracy in the economy, limit human rights, and hamper economic and social development. Our country's present multi-faceted economic policy is in accord with the law on advancing from small-scale production to socialism and is a long-term strategy. This will naturally lead to a situation in which a number of human rights cannot be implemented equally for all people. There will continue to be exploitation, but the socialist state will not allow that to lead to a situation in which human rights are violated brutally. We are aware of this reality, and based on this reality, we will promote economic and social development and create better material conditions in order to ensure human rights even better.

Implementing human rights in a class society is determined not only by the level of development of production but also by the political system. Even though the level of economic development of two countries may be the same, human rights may not be the same if their political systems are different. Human rights will be implemented better in those countries with a more democratic political system.

Human rights in our country have often been seriously violated in this and that place. This is not entirely due to

the fact that our economy is weak. It is also due to specific changes in the political-state system and the socioeconomic management mechanism. This is manifested above all in places where human rights have not been regarded as an element of the political-legal culture. We often regard people, the working people, as the means by which to reach some goal. Individuals are overlooked. Only the collective, which is often very vague, is elevated, and as a result the needs of the individual are slighted. The masses of people are the ones who create material and spiritual values. At the same time, they are the ones who consume the material and spiritual products that originate from their needs. We have paid little attention to this aspect, that is, regarding possession as an inalienable right of man. This is the reason for the great emphasis placed on bestowing favors and getting back what you give immediately.

Along with the very strange viewpoints concerning human rights, which in reality cover up the excessive, unreasonable, and unfair demands of individuals, there are also those who think that in society, individuals are the ones who should receive the favors and that the state is the one who should bestow the favors (both material and spiritual) on the people. Hasn't "thanks to the party and thanks to the government" become a common phrase? In the struggle to liberate the nation and build a new society, the party and state have accumulated great merit in leading the people to great victories, above all the right to make each person free. But saying that everything that they have has been given to them by the party and state will make them passive. This will make them forget their decisive role in the developmental process of history and cloud the concept of individual rights in society. By then, if needs concerning rights are mentioned, that will be viewed as something foreign and not revolutionary. To see more clearly the problem of democracy and human rights, there must be a correct understanding concerning the relationship between the individual and society and between citizens and the state.

Starting from the viewpoint "all for the happiness of the people," we must evaluate the progress of renovation based on what has been and will be done with respect to the problem of democracy and human rights. Human rights are not a gift from the state or a charitable act on the part of someone. They are an inherent part of socialism and lie within the nature of the socialist state.

In order to carry on democratization with the aim of expanding human rights, we must overcome bureaucratic centralism and build a lawful socialist state. The state organizations and their personnel must carry out the socialist laws, guarantee the people's rights, and involve the people in controlling the work of the state and society. The close involvement of the people will promptly put a stop to acts that violate democracy and human rights.

Lenin said that there is no such thing as standing outside politics. By that he meant that if the cultural standards of

the masses are low, we are tolerating a situation in which there is no democracy and the basic rights of people are violated. Thus, in order to have a democratic society, we must "study democracy" and allow human rights to be manifested. We must also "study human rights" and enable each person to understand what is meant by human rights and their obligation to implement these rights. That is a matter of the ability to implement rights as permitted by law. Today, in expanding democracy in economic management and manifesting the independence of the production installations, the directors must accept more and more rights. But not every director has the ability to make effective use of those rights in order to expand production and solve the problems related to human rights within the scope of his enterprise. Thus, along with exercising his great powers, a director must also respect the democratic rights and other human rights of the workers. To ensure that this is carried out and to prevent conflicts from arising, this must be codified in law.

With the requirements of freedom, which is a basic right of man, the concept that "nothing can be done unless allowed by law" must be replaced by the concept that "anything not prohibited by law is permissible." That will put a stop to abusing the law in order to violate human rights.

Civilized men need more than rice and modern material means. They also need justice and freedom, morals and kindness, and dignity and honor. The thing that is upsetting and angering many people today is the lack of democracy and fairness. People are still being trampled on, and human values are being ignored and turned upside down. While many honest laborers lead a very hard life and are beaten down, many opportunists and bad elements live a life of luxury. They are not punished, and sometimes they are even promoted. Because of this, the struggle for justice and freedom and the struggle to eliminate negative phenomena and acts that violate people's human rights are major tasks. That will make our society even more socialistic and more humane. Lenin warned that in the socialist revolution, eliminating the "wild animals," that is, the exploitative class, was not enough. He warned that if we allow "petty cravings" to arise and give more room to the "profiteers" and "thieves," it will be impossible for the revolution to advance, and there will be no socialism. Thus, the way to build a new society for man is to constantly expand democracy.

Footnote

1. Resolution of the Sixth Plenum of the VCP Central Committee (Sixth Term).

Human Motivation in Socialist Construction

902E0112B Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in
Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 21-26

[Article by Le Xuan Vu, associate professor of philosophy]

[Text] In the overall picture concerning our poor socio-economic situation, in the past few years there have been certain elements that have portrayed the entire scene. That includes the cooperative members who have abandoned fields of ripe rice and refused to harvest the rice or who have returned the "quota 100" fields. That includes workers who have shown no concern for the products produced or for the profits and losses of the enterprise but who have been concerned only about how to steal some nails, cement, or something else at the end of the night shift. That includes intellectuals, teachers, and scientists who have had to do simple manual labor instead of using their brains in order to live. That includes many cadres, workers, and civil servants who have worked very slowly, with several people doing the work that could be done by one person. Millions of people regard their primary job as secondary in importance while millions of others are waiting for a job. Of course, there are others who have made great sacrifices and sought ways to improve their country, but they are in the minority. What is so painful is the picture of an "entire country avoiding work and all the people smuggling," which is the opinion that most people seem to have even though that is an exaggeration. This makes it easier to understand why the per capita national income increased less than 2 percent during the 10 years (1976-1985) of the scientific and technical revolution. And like the national income, the 1986-1988 gross social product was lower than that during 1981-1985. Moreover, labor productivity stayed the same while material expenditures per dong of national income increased from 0.70 dong in 1976 to 0.94 dong in 1987.

During the resistance, which called for great sacrifices, the people enthusiastically made assaults. But in building socialism, the social system of the laboring people, the laborers are indifferent. Why is this? There are many reasons, but the main one is that not enough attention has been given to the real interests of the laborers. If attention is not given to the interests of the laborers, no matter how wonderful the ideology, it will disgrace itself. We talk about socialism in grand terms, but if the people see that nothing is being done to protect their interests, above all their economic interests, they will certainly "step back."

Every person has his own needs and interests. Needs can be turned into the motive force of activities with a clear direction and goal. Interests stimulate people to work. Needs and interests in society are often in conflict. The will power of this person and this group is often thwarted by the will power of another person and another group until a "common will power" is formed and "collaboration" creates history—"history is composed of the activities of people who are pursuing their own goals." (F. Engels) The mission of socialism is to resolve these conflicts over needs and interests conceptually and improve the quality of this "common will power" and "collaboration." Its mission is not to ignore or slight the needs and interests of each individual. But we have gotten into the habit of evaluating socialist construction

using economic figures and formal plans, which have often been wrong. We have not evaluated things by the quality of life or by what material and spiritual values have given to each person. Are we afraid to talk about interests, particularly material interests, out of fear that we will become involved in "bourgeois mediocrity?" Are people afraid of talking about the direct interests of specific people out of fear of falling into "individualism?" The end result will be empty political mobilization and the dissolution of human units in a collective ideology about which people have only a rudimentary understanding and which will limit and kill human motivation. In fighting the enemy and saving the country, each person enjoyed the greatest benefit, that is, to live in an independent and free country. But in building socialism, what benefits do they enjoy? If people work harder, will they reap the benefits? There are still no guarantees of this, and this has not been put into law.

"Regardless of the work that people do, from small to big and from near to far, everything is equal." (Ho Chi Minh) If we destroy human motivation, if people are not interested in or concerned about the results of their labor and that of the collective and entire society, and if the material and spiritual rights of each laborer are not guaranteed fully, it will be impossible to have a vigorous and strong revolutionary movement to have the masses build socialism.

The recent changes based on carrying on renovation and emphasizing a variety of interests are liberating the production forces and energizing the national economy. This holds great promise. However, to make fundamental changes, the concept of "socialism for people" must be understood thoroughly and made even more concrete in each sphere of social life. People are both a collective body and an individual body. They are the "embodiment of social relationships" and a "perfect compound." At the same time, they are individual units and people with separate personalities. If people are to be the decisive factor in building socialism, the motivating factors—that is, the economic, political, social, and cultural factors—must form a unified system. Spirit must have the same effect, and it must affect each person in order to liberate and expand the essential forces of people.

1. Above all, steps must be taken to guarantee the legitimate economic interests of each person in a multi-faceted commodity production economy that is expanding according to socialist guidelines. The problem here is the policy, or more generally, a correct economic line. The recent changes in the economic management structure and mechanism, particularly Resolution 10 on agriculture, Resolution 16 on policies toward economic elements outside the state sector, and the policies on expanding foreign economic relations are manifesting a positive effect. Recognizing the varied but unified nature of socialist property, it is essential that the policy on a multi-faceted economic structure be implemented in order to free the production strengths needed for the

national welfare and the people's livelihood, in which the national economy plays a guiding role. The bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies mechanism must be done away with in order to implement socialist economic accounting, which is in harmony with the interests of the laborers and other people. Democratizing the economy will tie the producers to the production materials and turn them into owners of the commercial production installations. This will continue to be promoted so that each producer in the national economy masters his job, from formulating production and investment plans and organizing and managing the laborers to maintaining product quantity and quality, prices, incomes, and wages. The economic elements that expand in a unified and cooperative system have the same interests. The products will become commodities and manifest their value on the markets. The principle of distribution according to labor will eliminate special privileges and interests and average-ism. The state is encouraging each person to build wealth legitimately and managing the planned commodity production economy using policies and laws. It is not interfering in managing specific commercial production activities but is only guiding and regulating activities through taxes, including an income tax. Because of these changes in the economic structure and management mechanism, there will certainly be great confusion and even serious difficulties. But once the economic interests of the producers and things are just and rational, there will be greater enthusiasm, a greater sense of responsibility, and greater labor productivity. Instead of "socialist" emulation that is often just a matter of form, there will be real emulation and wholesome competition in an active economic system based on the newest technical methods.

2. People have not only economic interests but also political, cultural, and spiritual interests. The bourgeois revolution recognized human rights and the rights of citizens. Socialism must prove its superiority, ensure the implementation of those rights in reality, and democratize all of social life. Socialist democracy is the most important or even the only means of socialism, like a social organism. The principles here are "sufficient power of the laborers" and laborers participating in solving the problems of the state and society at the center and at the bases. That is the only way to energize the human factor to support socialism and free the pent-up potential. The situation in which a socialist state is transformed into a bureaucratic apparatus separated from the people or in which the state uses a "stick to chase people into paradise" or acts like a "bully" to take away the rights of the laborers and violate democratic freedoms is foreign to us. A formalistic democracy is just as harmful as no democracy at all. Naturally, in a democracy, there must be leaders, but they must use democratic means. Democracy must go hand in hand with the laws, and people must remain vigilant and oppose those who want to use the growth of democracy for evil purposes. Renovating the political system based on democratic guidelines and practicing self-government in harmony with centralization is essential if the laborers

are to actually use their power with the credentials of active subjects of social activities. To do this, the party's leadership must be renovated and improved, and the independence of the mass organizations must be respected. In particular, a state with socialist jurisdiction must be built so that all of society, including the party and state, lives and works in accord with the laws.

3. Individual freedom is the condition for expanding the freedom of everyone. "You cannot have 'one for all' unless you also have 'all for one.'" Each person must live within the framework of good social relationships.

After implementing the resolution of the Sixth Party Congress for more than 2 years now, "social policy continues to be slighted, which means that the human factor is being slighted." Steps have not been taken to "actually manifest unity between the economic and social policies." Thus, the potential of our socialist peasants, workers, and intellectuals has not been manifested. There are still many burning social problems that must be solved in order to ensure normal living and working conditions for each person, for reproduction, and for the development of good social relationships: jobs, a wage system, security, welfare, social justice, and so on. In order to eliminate idleness and create great enthusiasm for development, it is essential that we overcome average-ism, just as we would a children's disease, in order to affirm the role of each person as an independent personality whose value depends on his contribution to society.

Socialism must liberate every class of people and enable them to draw closer to each other, with social equality for all. But socialism, just like the road to socialism, is not average-ism, and it certainly isn't boorish average-ism that regards individual personality as something unimportant or something that must be eliminated. Each great social achievement requires collective effort, organization, and discipline, but collective activities cannot be carried out without individual innovation and perseverance. We have long advocated elevating collectivism and opposing individualism, but not crushing individuals or eliminating human units. But in reality, just a few years ago, no one dared to earn a lot of money or openly declare that he had broken out of the mold in society or in theoretical thinking. People were afraid of being regarded as "economically well off" or of advocating a "division of letters" and monopoly of the truth. On the other hand, people avoided fulfilling their individual responsibilities and hid behind the collective "we." When the work was done improperly, no one took responsibility.

If individuality and independent personality are eliminated, why be enthusiastic or waste energy thinking about things? It's easier to keep on the old path, give up your dreams, and submit to your fate even if things are not pleasant. In the past, we gave too much emphasis to the collective. Now, to enable people to become the motive force for growth, we must manifest the values of individuals in the various collective forms of social life.

Although we advocate collectivism and oppose individualism, we must respect each individual and give each person the freedom to grow. This is because the collective is more important than the individual only when it is the collective body composed of all individuals. If each person is just a zero, the larger collective will be a zero, too. And that is without mentioning the outstanding individuals with great abilities.

4. Stressing the role of the human factor and regarding this as the decisive factor for the development of society will be meaningless unless people change and their thinking, spirit, morals, and abilities are developed. This also means that if people are concerned about cultural and spiritual interests, they will be a great force in developing society, particularly in today's world, where intelligence has become a great resource.

We have also scored many outstanding achievements in this sphere, but these achievements were all scored in a previous period. Socialism is at a turning point in its development and is being renovated in accord with its nature. People, with the credentials of the motive force in building socialism, must be capable of overcoming the mistakes of the past and manifesting the superiority of socialism. They must affirm their socialist ideals by relying on socialist bases and opposing the distortions and lies of those who are stirring up trouble and exploiting the pessimism and vacillation with respect to socialism. They must prove that the reason why we have chosen socialism rather than capitalism is that socialism is the only correct path and that after a period of labor, socialism in our country has scored the most recent achievements of modern science and technology and is looking for measures and forms to become an effective economic leader and manifest Vietnam's potential under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Facing these requirements, we must face up to our present backwardness in the cultural and spiritual spheres, not only in actual situations but also in viewpoints. We are backward in theoretical understanding. Eight million people are illiterate. Culture and education have declined. Will Level-I education be universal by the year 2000? Few people can say anything about managerial culture, because few are skilled in their work. Here, there are 30-40 times fewer scientific and technical cadres in the research and development sector than there are in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. And the number is even much smaller than that in many of the developing countries in Asia. Scientific and technical products do not fetch as much as commodities, and "brain power is cheaper than brawn." As a reward, only 3 kg of rice was given to each of those who undertook a 10-year project to study crop varieties and who made a profit of billions of dong each year using main-crop methods. The Initiatives and Inventions Department of the State Science and Technology Commission has 6 million pieces of data, but each day, only three people use this material. That is without mentioning the waste of intellectual products and other capabilities. The small amounts invested represent a disaster for education,

science and technology, the cultural work of the Ministry of Culture, and public health. All of this stems from erroneous and superficial ideas about the position and role of culture in socialism and in today's world. We must overcome the idea of giving these sectors only the "left over" investment capital and cadres. That is the only way to satisfy the cultural needs of the people and create the conditions necessary for the all-round development of each individual so that they are rich spiritually, pure in thought, perfect physically, and creative in thought and action. Intelligence is a valuable asset, and ability is a scarce commodity. There were many "wise men" in the past. The Vietnamese people, who are brave and intelligent, need new abilities in this new period. We must soon perfect the human strategy and the policies on intelligence and our socialist geniuses.

Lenin said that "illiterates are outside politics." Today, the need for literacy is probably even greater. President Ho said that "in building the country, there are four problems that must be given attention and that must be considered to be of equal importance: politics, the

economy, society, and culture."¹ Culture is the individual standards of a society, the individual standards of each person. Thus, in looking at the targets and motive forces of socialism, it is impossible to order the cultural and spiritual problems and lives of the people and say that people's problems are inferior.

In summary, if people are to be the decisive factor in socialist construction, there must be a dynamic system to produce causes and effects. This dynamic system will be of overall benefit. Above all, it will benefit the laborers materially. This requires that we reconsider socialism in terms of its humanity and democracy: all for man and for the happiness and all-round development of man. Everything rests with man.

Although people must be the motive force, they must also be the target of socialism. That is the dialectic.

Footnote

1. Ho Chi Minh, "On Cultural and Artistic Work," Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1971, p 70.

Man and Class

00000000 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 27-32

[Thien Nhan and Hoang Cong; article not translated]

A New Proposal on Agricultural Development in the Mekong Delta

902E0112C Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in
Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 33-39

[Nguyen Khac Vien]

[Text] During a trip to Nam Bo at the beginning of 1989, I had the good fortune to find a book and a person. In my opinion, the book, *Agricultural Production Systems in the Mekong Delta*, is one of just a handful of books that succeeds in showing the close relationship between the natural and social sciences. I wanted to meet the author, engineer Dang Kim Son. I thought that I would meet an elderly scholar with gray hair, but instead he turned out to be very young. And I was happy to see that he was a scientist who had much practical experience, who had pondered things deeply, and who had great enthusiasm. Below, I would like to record the answers that Dang Kim Son gave to a number of questions.

[Vien] It's been reported that the Mekong Delta just had a successful rice harvest. You are close to the peasants there and so I'm sure that you are happy about and proud of this.

[Son] Yes, I'm happy, but not that happy. It's true that the yield this year reached 7.7 million tons, which is 1 million tons higher than in previous years and almost double the rice yield right after liberation. Per capital rice yields have increased to 550 kg (in 1987, in the north the figure was only 230 kg). The agricultural sector has made a great effort: The amount of nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers has increased 530,000 and 200,000 tons respectively, and the amount of insecticides has increased 1,000 tons per year. In many provinces, yields have risen quite a bit: In Long An, yields increased 130,000 tons, in Dong Thap, 160,000 tons, and in An Giang 70,000 tons. More than ever before, the Mekong Delta has shown itself to be the "rice bowl" of the country. Almost one-third of the total yield has been sent elsewhere, and the paddy purchased accounts for almost 50 percent of that of the entire country. Yields of other products besides rice have increased, too. Sugar cane, fruit, and pepper yields account for 40 percent of the country's total yield. The figure for legumes and tobacco is 30 percent, that for ducks is 50 percent, and that for marine products is 40 percent. The Mekong delta has provided 50 percent of the pork of the central echelon and contributed 60 percent of the export value of aquatic products of the entire country.

[Vien] Then why did you say that you are not really happy?

[Son] If you sit in an office and read the reports sent in and see such good figures, you will certainly be optimistic. It's true that since liberation, because of the efforts made by the peasants and sectors, agricultural production has changed greatly. However, because I have worked a lot with the peasants (our research unit has conducted economic and technical surveys in almost 400 households, carried on 100 tests, and used experimental models in many places), studied a number of primary source documents on natural and social conditions, and had a chance to read about the experiences of other countries and talk with specialists both here and abroad, in general, I see that there are still many problems. The overall agricultural picture in our country, including the Mekong Delta, is still not very bright. Of course, every sector is encountering difficulties right now. Agriculture is not the only sector that is experiencing difficulties. Even though the situation has improved and greater emphasis has been placed on agriculture, with the present guidelines for developing and investing in the Mekong Delta, I don't think that we have achieved the best results. And that is without mentioning the bad effects that this will have over the long term.

[Vien] In what respect are things still not bright?

[Son] The initial result of agricultural expansion must be an improvement in the standard of living of the peasants. As compared with the peasants in the Red River Delta—but not with peasants in other countries—the peasants in the Mekong Delta have more rice and fish. But looking at various other needs of life, it must be said that the peasants in the Mekong Delta are very poor. If I had to choose to live in either a rural area in the north or a rural area in the south, the choice would not be difficult.

[Vien] That seems to be contrary to the ideas and feelings of many people.

[Son] In order to avoid subjective observations, let's look at the results of a number of surveys conducted by organizations among peasants in the Mekong Delta:

Seventy percent of the peasants live in thatched huts, and one-third of these are small field huts.

More than 50 percent drink unboiled water. The amount of cloth sold retail each year amounts to only 73 percent of the average for the entire country. Eighty percent do not have books or magazines to read, and 50 percent have never seen a film. In a survey conducted among 90 households in three provinces, it was found that the adults consumed an average of 1,800 calories a day, and only 14 percent of the energy was provided by protein.

Norm above 100,000 people	Mekong Delta	Entire country
Number of general schools	17.7	32.4
Middle school students	600	1,350
Scientific and technical cadres	430	1,216
Cadres with college standards	316	760
Hospitals	1.2	2.1
Medical Doctors	34	93

[Vien] More rice is produced, but they are still poor. Why?

[Son] To increase rice yields, we must invest. The research results of the 1988 Intensive Rice Cultivation Program show that in order to reach a yield of 8-10 tons per hectare per two crops, each crop requires 80-90 kg of pure nitrogen, 40-60 kg of phosphate, 4-5 tanks of insecticide, 10-15 kg of food preservatives, and 60-100 kg of fuel. With the excellent work households in An Giang, to have a yield a 6-8 tons per hectare each winter-spring season, we must invest 3.6 tons of paddy. In Long An, to have a yield of 9 tons per hectare per two crops, we must invest 4.6 tons. That does not include the 100-130 man-days per hectare per crop or the investments in building water conservancy projects and fields. After subtracting their expenses, the peasants who grow rice receive only about 50 percent of the yield. After setting aside rice for his family and livestock, each person is left with about 250 kg of paddy to satisfy the other needs during the year (at the lowest prices in the country). The peasants are not starving, but they are illiterate, sick, and undernourished. A conference on housing was held recently in the Mekong Delta, but after much discussion, no conclusion was reached about how to overcome the situation in which 70-80 percent of the peasants must live in thatched huts because of their low incomes. Even though rice prices increased greatly last year, they have lagged far behind the price of industrial goods, including the price of insecticide, gasoline, and machinery. Unlike many other countries, our country cannot subsidize the price of materials for those who grow rice. In the interests of the entire economy, paddy prices cannot be increased very much.

[Vien] But rice yields must be increased quickly if we are to solve the grain problem.

[Son] That is the key point. Today, the policy of the agricultural sector is to concentrate investments on increasing grain production, particularly rice, by increasing the area, productivity, and multicropping. The key points are to open up several hundred thousand additional hectares of new high-producing varieties of rice and increase the number of crops per year, including in the recently opened areas. To do this will require much machinery, gasoline, fertilizer and insecticide. People will have to migrate, and water conservancy systems will have to be opened quickly. To date, we have not invested very much in agriculture. Investments must be increased greatly. Take fertilizer, for example. We

have provided only 60 kg of NPK per hectare as compared with 180 kg in China and 300-400 kg in Eastern Europe. As FAO and PNUD agricultural specialists observed in 1985: "With little investment, yields of 2.75 tons of paddy per hectare are excellent." If we concentrate on investing more fertilizer, insecticides, machinery, and manpower, we can increase yields by 1.2 million tons of paddy a year. That would take only a few years. And the agricultural sector is moving in that direction.

[Vien] With such a policy, how can you be skeptical about the results?

[Son] Whenever we take reporters or higher-echelon cadres to see a new canal built in a region that was formerly a wilderness and that is now producing 4-5 tons of paddy a year, where the newly arrived peasant households are producing high yields, it's easy for them to think that this is a great success. But if you really want to be the master, you must invest much money. You will certainly think: Shouldn't that amount of foreign currency and labor have produced more than this? What should be done to achieve the highest investment results possible? Let me say something about investing in water conservancy. The Tan Thanh Water Conservancy Office in Long An Province told me that to drain a hectare of rice, you must excavate and emplace 388 cubic meters of earth, and to irrigate a hectare of rice you must excavate and emplace 554 cubic meters of earth (64 percent of the work is done by machine). In Moc Hoa, 510 cubic meters of earth must be excavated and emplaced for each hectare of winter-spring rice. It is also necessary to build water conservancy projects in the fields and perfect the fields. In 1988, Long An excavated and and emplaced 6 million cubic meters of earth. At the end of the 19th Century when the Mekong Delta first began to be farmed, to increase the rice area by 1 hectare, you had to excavate only 12 cubic meters. By 1920, this figure had increased to 161 cubic meters. Now it is 500-600 cubic meters. In wilderness areas, machines must be used, and communications routes must be opened. Storehouses must be built, and machines and electricity must be installed. Besides that, as mentioned above, much more fertilizer and insecticide is needed. Except for manpower, the other expenditures all require foreign currency. Today, according to most proposals, to produce 10 million tons of rice in the Mekong Delta in the next few years, more than \$200 million in foreign currency will be needed. But last year, exports by the entire

agricultural sector reached only 200 million rubles-dollars. That is without mentioning capital construction capital. Rice cannot support the development of rice.

[Vien] Then, what can be done? How can we produce sufficient food for consumption? If we can't produce enough grain, what must we do?

[Son] This is a fundamental issue that requires that we renovate our thinking. Are we looking for ways to produce much grain, that is, rice, or are we trying to provide people with enough food to eat? Let me give you some a few figures: Vietnam consumes much rice, averaging 239 kg per person per year. Thailand and Laos consume 15 percent less, and Indonesia and Malasia consume 50 percent less. India consumes only 30 percent as much as Vietnam. When a delegation led by General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh visited India, one member of the delegation asked an Indian scientist how India has managed to solve the food problem in view of the fact that India produces less than 200 kg of grain per person per year. His response was: "We don't eat just rice or wheat. We also eat many vegetables, fruits, and legumes and drink cow and goat milk." At a conference on rice that was held in Hangzhou, China, in 1987, the representatives from 26 countries and international organizations and scholars attending the conference unanimously concluded that "to become self-sufficient in grain by planting rice, a country must pay a heavy social price and must invest heavily in water conservancy and materials." Using agriculture as the basis for exporting goods and earning foreign currency requires that much foreign currency be invested in order to provide food. The result is a vicious circle. The first thing is to replace the meal pattern. This obsession with eating rice must be eliminated.

[Vien] Changing a long-standing habit is not easy.

[Son] During a trip to India, specialists there told me that not too many years ago, the people in the north ate mostly wheat. In the south, the people ate mostly rice. But people gradually abandoned their old habits. Today, meals include legumes, vegetables, and milk, and so they are more attractive. India has been successful in processing food and in coordinating large industry with small industry and handicrafts. Processing has added approximately 30 percent to the production costs, but the nutritional value and use rate have increased, too. Families can use both rudimentary or modern equipment to process food. Thus, changing the meal pattern must go hand in hand with changing the crop allocation and expanding the processing industry. During a trip to the Mekong Delta in 1987, Mr Savanige, a specialist with the Mekong River Cooperative Program stated: "Based on the development experiences in many places in the world, in countries or regions where rice production is still the main concern, life will continue to be difficult. Thus, studies must be done and proposals must be made concerning diversification in each place." The conclusion of basic research project No 60-02 was that in the Mekong Delta, rice cannot support rice. If our meal

pattern relies mainly on rice, even if we invest much machinery, fertilizer, and insecticide, the mono-cultural cultivation pattern will be backward. Agriculture will not be able to provide enough food for consumption and raw materials for industry and exports if we continue along this path.

[Vien] Is there some other way?

[Son] Before I answer that, I would like to talk about the agricultural situation in general. What is worrisome is that the increase in production has been very slow as compared with the increase in the population. During the past 30 years, rice yields in the north have increased almost 2 quintals per hectare. It still takes 10 man-days to produce 1 quintal of paddy just as it did decades ago (in the developed countries, this takes 10 minutes). Each year, our farming area declines 70,000 hectares a year while our population increases by 1.2 million people. The agricultural allocation is seriously out of balance. Animal husbandry is weak, the forests are being destroyed, and the subsidiary food crops percentage is very small in the Mekong Delta. Rice accounts for almost 97 percent of the area cultivated in grain crops. Subsidiary food crops account for only 3.6 percent of the area (nationally, subsidiary food crops account for 16.5 percent of the area). The increased rice yields of the past several years have not gone beyond "feast or famine." The agricultural sector has calculated that "in normal production conditions (no natural disasters), 10 percent of the peasant households still do not have enough grain, including households in the Mekong Delta."

[Vien] How can we solve this problem?

[Son] A report of the Mekong Delta Integrated Basic Survey Program (1985-1986) stated: "The greatest obstacle is the idea that all the land in the Mekong Delta must be used to grow rice. If it becomes necessary to use some of the sulfate soil area in the Long Xuyen quadrangle, Dong Thap Muoi, or Ca Mau Island, this will require huge investments in water conservancy projects and agricultural materials, and the interests of the environment will have to be sacrificed." (Please note the statement about the environment.) The one-crop (rice) system cannot solve the immediate grain problem, and in the long term, this will destroy the environment. By then, it will be too late. We can rely on machine power, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, and the manual labor of millions of people in order to force nature to yield much rice. Subjugating nature like this can bring a number of immediate results, but in the long term, this will have a very bad effect. In the world today, in expanding agriculture, there is a trend toward respecting nature instead of forcing nature and destroying the original production systems. There is a trend toward creating the conditions necessary to promote internal expansion, mobilizing capabilities, and limiting the shortcomings. That is, the trend is toward making full use of the natural and social laws and not forcing things in the direction you want when you have material and technical strength.

[Vien] What about the agricultural production system?

[Son] Our forefathers who came from the northern and central regions to work Dong Nai and the Mekong Delta were people with a long tradition of cultivating various types of rice. They grew many crops each year and understood water conservancy techniques. They planted gardens, worked fields, and grew mulberry trees, sugar cane, coconuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. They raised cattle, buffaloes, pigs, chickens, ducks, and fish. In Nam Bo, they found fertile land and favorable natural conditions. Our ancestors did not plant just rice. Depending on the place and on the natural, social, and economic conditions, they created many forms for exploiting this virgin land. Thus, they created many different agricultural production systems with different soil preparation, cultivation, and economic management systems. Such a production system usually covered a rather wide area, from 250,000 hectares on up, consisting of different natural, socioeconomic, and historical conditions. This was a varied agriculture, not a one-crop (rice) system, and rice cultivation consisted of a rational allocation of local rice and floating rice and not just high-producing new varieties.

[Vien] In general, how many production systems are there?

[Son] We can talk about five major production systems: slash burn forests, floating rice areas, rice areas that rely on the rains, irrigated rice areas, and garden areas. Each area has its own advantages and disadvantages concerning nature and socioeconomic aspects. For example, it may be easy to plant a particular crop, but are communications convenient? Is the area heavily or sparsely populated, and are there markets? Can agriculture, forestry, and fishing be coordinated, and are there processing capabilities? Can travel be organized? In some areas, machines must be brought in for farming, and water conservancy must be strengthened. But in other regions, doing things this way would be bad, or it would not be worth the effort. Just because you have modern technology does not mean that you can ignore traditional technology. Take, for example, digging irrigation canals to plant gardens in places where the rivers are building up silt deposits. River water can be put into the gardens and used to raise fish and shrimp. This is a very intelligent way of doing things. Or yellow ants can be used to eliminate garden insects. Cajuput can be grown along the coast. Depending on the area, various types of crops can be grown, and pigs, ducks, shrimp and fish, and bees can be raised. It is essential that we switch from concentrating on rice alone. Instead, we must diversify and balance the production systems in accord with the natural

and social conditions in each ecological and agricultural subzone. We must be aware of the natural, economic, technical, and social advantages and disadvantages when arranging the crop growing and animal husbandry pattern and investing in water conservancy, communications, and processing projects. We must look for ways to improve cultural life. There is no reason to grow rice everywhere. Much foreign currency and many scientific research projects have focused on rice alone. In a family with many children, if the parents coddle one child, even though that child may thrive for awhile, the parents won't be able to support everyone and in the long run the entire family will starve.

[Vien] Won't investments be spread too thin?

[Son] To the contrary. The scope will be broader, but the work sections will be more concentrated. Instead of investing a lot from A to Z in one system that cannot support itself, we will invest in a number of decisive elements that now control the production systems. If the state invests 1, the people will immediately invest 5-10, and the internal laws of the production systems will manifest an effect. Each agricultural household will create the capabilities for "taking short, rearing long" and actively invest small amounts. But overall, there will be a redistribution of income among the production systems. Gardens, forests, floating rice, and subsidiary food crops will become self-supporting and invest in expanded reproduction for the production systems, including irrigated, high-producing rice. As for foreign currency, it will be possible to earn several hundred million dollars a year. Some of the "violations of higher orders" that have happened in production have actually been in accord with the laws and the desires and capabilities of the peasants. In the past, there was a leader who advised Ben Tre to cut down the coconut trees and plant rice. Today, the coconut area has expanded greatly. Contrary to orders, the gardens have expanded greatly, with gardens accounting for one-third of the farming area in Tien Giang. Even though the policy of the district is to keep out the brackish water and grow rice, the peasants in Dam Doi District in Minh Hai Province have demolished the dams and are raising shrimp in the fields. If we invest properly (intensive investment) and guide things correctly, we will be able to increase yields, reduce the cost of producing agricultural products, and actively arrange an efficient agricultural allocation.

[Vien] Would you give a few concrete examples?

[Son] Let me present the main features of the five production systems:

Production Systems	Economic obstacle	Technical obstacle	Social obstacle
Slash-burn fields	The system for transferring land to the people	Containing the fire	Poor cultural life
Floating rice	Investment capital and low household incomes	Difficulties concerning seed, preparing the soil in time, and need for additional materials	Inferior cultural life.
Rainwater rice			
Irrigated multicropped rice	Investment capital, low household incomes	Construction of irrigated fields, materials	Ensuring the interests of the peasants during collectivization.
Gardens	Capital, purchasing and tax policies, stable markets	Materials, processing, cultivation techniques	Ensuring the interests of the peasants during collectivization.

These production systems have the following advantages:

Slash-burn fields: There is much humus, the area is large, there are natural sources of water, fish are available, livestock can be left to graze, there are natural sources of bees, birds, and animals, medicinal herbs are available, and tourism can be expanded.

Floating rice: The area is large, there are natural sources of water, irrigation water is available, and additional crops of subsidiary food crops and industrial crops can be planted.

Rainwater rice: There is much rainwater, there is tidal water, laborers are available during the dry season, there are sources of natural shrimp, additional summer-autumn crops and subsidiary food crops can be grown, and ducks can be raised.

Irrigated multicropped rice: There are water conservancy projects, and labor, communications, and markets are convenient. Additional subsidiary food crops can be planted, and livestock and poultry can be raised.

Gardens: Maximum use can be made of solar radiation, and the tides, labor, capital, communications, and markets are convenient. Shrimp and bees can be raised. Things can be processed, and crops can be interplanted.

[Vien] Do you have a general plan for the Mekong Delta?

[Son] The following is one possible plan:

Irrigated Multicropped rice: Two rice, one legume: 500,000 hectares.

Rainwater rice: (30 percent summer-autumn-early tenth-month rice crop rotation and 30 percent tenth-month rice—subsidiary food crops): 800,000 hectares.

Floating rice: Rice—subsidiary food crops (sesame, jute, legumes): 200,000 hectares.

Gardens: 300-500,000 hectares.

Slash-burn fields: 700-800,000 hectares.

[Vien] What will be the result of such an allocation?

[Son] The important thing is that the garden area will gradually increase from 11 percent of the agricultural area to 20 percent of the area. Forests will increase from 8 percent to 18-20 percent of the area. The irrigated multicropped rice area will increase to the optimum—not the maximum—level. And through crop rotation, we can plant an additional crop of legumes. With legumes, vegetables, and fruit, the amount of grain consumed can be reduced from 350 kg per person per year to 200 kg. Each hectare of soybeans can supply enough protein for 31 people per year, 1 hectare of sesame can supply enough fat for 20 people, and [1 hectare can supply] coconuts for 80 people. The people will consume only about 3 million tons of rice and 300,000 tons of subsidiary food crops. Together with the processed by-products, they can expand animal husbandry. The Mekong Delta will easily be able to export several million tons of rice a year. With 1.5 million hectares planted in annual plants, 500,000 hectares planted in perennial plants, and 700,000 hectares of forests, there will be adequate raw materials for industry and exports (40,000 tons of jute, 2 million tons of coconut, and 600,000 tons of honey and sugar). It will be possible to carry on large-scale joint ventures with countries in the SEV in order to form stable specialized cultivation zones. It will definitely be possible to produce 10 million tons of paddy and virtually solve the problem of raising livestock and poultry. It will be possible to raise marine products, carry on commercial forest activities, create a basis for carrying on the consumer goods and export goods program, improve the lives of the peasants, and transform the appearance of the rural areas (with a system of processing industries in the area). For the long term, the entire natural and agricultural ecosystem will continue to come into balance. The amount of investment capital needed for this plan will not exceed the amount specified in the rice investment plan.

Based on these guidelines, in the Mekong Delta, there will be another “Dien Bien Phu” that will mark a turning point in our country’s economy in the coming period. Deciding how to “attack” is very important.

A new development strategy requires new scientific research and production organization measures and appropriate policies and mechanisms. But I will talk about those interesting problems some other time.

The Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone—10 Years

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[Article by Le Quang Thanh, secretary of the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone]

[Text] In accord with the resolution of the National Assembly, the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone was established on 30 May 1979 by merging Vung Tau City, Long Son Village (which used to be a part of Dong Nai Province), and Con Dao Ward (which used to be a part of Hau Giang Province).

The main political tasks that the central echelon entrusted to the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone include: providing services to support oil and gas exploration and drilling; taking responsibility for providing work places and satisfying the daily needs of Vietnamese and Soviet cadres, specialists, and workers; contributing to providing a number of technical and capital construction services; and protecting the oil and gas projects on the mainland and at sea. In the middle of 1980, when foreign capitalist companies terminated their oil and gas contracts with us, the special zone had to make preparations for cooperation between Vietnam and the Soviet Union in this sphere. Beginning in November 1981, after the Joint Vietnamese-Soviet Oil and Gas Enterprise was established, service activities became even more urgent. Together with a large quantity of materials and technical equipment, more and more oil and gas forces were sent to the special zone. At present, the total number of Vietnamese and Soviet cadres, specialists, and workers here exceeds 10,000 people. Even though there are still many difficulties and shortages, since the very beginning, the special zone has reserved good locations and houses and supplied a large quantity of food, electricity and water, and other consumer goods for these forces. (The Joint Vietnamese-Soviet Oil and Gas Enterprise uses 29 percent of the total housing area managed by the local authorities and 10 percent of the total power of the entire special zone.) Thousands of family members of the cadres, specialists, and workers have been given jobs. Many new services in the information, communications and transportation, customs, and banking sectors have been carried out well. The special zone has also made a notable contribution in supplying materials and laborers in order to complete a number of projects of the oil and gas industry. Regular attention is given to protecting the oil and gas installations and preventing the enemy from carrying out his destructive plots.

Thanks to the efforts mentioned above, in a vast area in the western part of Vung Tau that used to be a Brugiera gymnorhiza swamp, there are now a number of impressive and modern material and technical bases of the sea petroleum industry. Many housing and work zones with adequate facilities have been built. Our oil and gas industry has trained a large number of skilled cadres, specialists, and workers who are capable of handling the complex technical tasks in an efficient manner. By the end of 1988, the Joint Vietnamese-Soviet Oil and Gas

Enterprise had fulfilled the plan of pumping 1 million tons of crude oil, of which almost 950,000 tons were exported.

Along with supporting oil and gas exploration and drilling, building economic bases managed by the localities is regarded as one of the special zone's important political tasks. Naturally, one of the leading tasks is to support the oil and gas industry. But building economic bases managed by the localities is also a very important task, because only by building such economic bases will it be possible to build a "foundation" on which the centrally-managed economy can grow.

During the past 10 years, because the special zone has constantly striven to increase production capabilities (by 1988, the gross value of the fixed assets in the material production sphere had increased 10 fold and the gross social product had doubled), the zone can now satisfy the needs of the oil and gas industry. As for supplying food, the situation here would be very passive and confused if annual per capita fish yields in the special zone were not the highest in the country and if the special zone was not 50-60 percent self-sufficient in meat and vegetables. The needs of production and daily life are quite varied. The special zone cannot and, given the conditions of the commodity economy, does not have to produce everything on the spot. The important thing is to be able to expand the sources. However, the only way that the special zone can engage in a two-way exchange of many types of commodities and enrich the locality's commodity fund even more is by exploiting the strengths of the locality, fulfilling the obligation of delivering goods to the central echelon, and fulfilling the contracts with neighboring provinces and cities.

That is the reality, but the important problem is how to exploit the strengths and create real economic strength for the locality. Based on the work practices, the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone Party Organization clearly realizes that the most important thing is to decide on the proper direction of and determine suitable steps for the locally-managed economy.

Through a period of working, thinking, studying, and gaining experience, during the past several years, the special zone party organization has affirmed that the local industries in the special zone are primarily service industries. While continuing to promote other economic activities, a great effort must be made to expand the service industries and put these industries at the forefront. In this, special attention must be given to travel and import-export services. This policy has become involved in life, generated clear economic results, and opened up a new direction for economic development in the locality.

Reality has shown that by expanding the travel industry—a "smokeless" industry—the special zone has made effective use of medium-sized and light materials and equipment and the favorable natural conditions in order to do business and provide jobs for many people by

carrying on "people's travel service." Moving from the small to the large, the special zone's travel industry now operates 5 hotels and 36 inns with 400 rooms and 1,100 beds. Investment sources have expanded, and the number of foreign tourists has increased. As a result, each year the business figures are among the highest in the country. In 1988, the Vung Tau Travel Corporation earned 18 billion dong and 10 million rubles-dollars.

There are also many economic units in the special zone that are involved in import-export services, including on-the-spot export activities and "cross-border" import-export services to neighboring provinces and cities, and that are satisfying many of the needs of production and life. Storehouses, ports, and means of transportation and stevedoring have been built, and these are operated on an industrial scale. Although the export processing industry is still weak, because a good job has been done in carrying on import-export services, for a long time now this industry, together with the travel industry, has managed to make a profit and led the way in contributing to building up the local budget.

Along with expanding travel services, the economic elements have been encouraged to invest capital, manpower, and technology in commercial production. Using a number of specific measures, the special zone has quickly solved a rather large number of difficult problems for production and circulation and, at the same time, expanded joint ventures with other localities. Much latent potential has been liberated. Because of the wholesome competition, production and market activities have expanded. In 1988, the collective and private fishing sectors, with 1,295 boats and 19,737 "CV," produced 18,000 tons of marine products, the highest ever. The other types of commodities also increased in terms of both quantity and quality.

Making use of the state's investment law, the special sector has experimented with carrying on joint ventures with foreign corporations. It has carried on operations and gained experience and, starting from a small scale, gradually expanded. Because of having a unified viewpoint and policy, the units directly involved in foreign economic activities have broadened trade activities. As a result, the special zone has now signed more than 10 economic contracts (of which 9 are with capitalist corporations). The work is brand-new and not much has been achieved yet. But the special zone has managed to earn initial investment capital in hard currencies, provided jobs for many laborers, and opened up a new and promising field. Something else that is important is that from "opening this door," the special zone now understands the problems concerning potential and economic and investment structure and has the information necessary to determine which business methods will be effective.

We now know the price that has been paid for the rigid viewpoint once regarded as the guiding viewpoint during the period of state subsidies: "The planned norms must be fulfilled regardless of the price." Thus, the special

zone has urgently promoted the work of renovating the economic management mechanism. The state's managerial functions regarding the economy and the functions of the corporations and enterprises in managing production and business have been determined quite clearly. The corporations and enterprises have gradually been given greater and greater independence in carrying on "integrated business activities." The only state norm that must be fulfilled is that of "making payments to the budget." The wage contract measures in the production sectors and the afforestation and forest protection contracts have been carried out quickly. A number of state-operated units are experimenting with making bids on materials and equipment in order to do business. Within the limits allowed and based on the law of value and the law of supply and demand, the special zone has taken the initiative and been flexible in setting the price of many goods based on implementing the one-price mechanism and compensating prices in wages.

As a result of having created positive economic changes, the special zone has favorable conditions for implementing the social policies and satisfying the essential cultural, social, security, and national defense needs of the people.

Tourists who visit Vung Tau frequently observe that the local landscape has changed very quickly. Until very recently, there was nothing along the sides of the roads. Now there are rows of beautiful houses.

In the special zone today, one out of every four people has attended school. The number of students from kindergarten through general middle school has increased 1.5-3.0 times as compared with when the special zone was first established. Many new schools have been and are being built.

Professional and mass arts and letters activities are in full swing. The number of books and magazines and per capita attendance at theaters and artistic events is high as compared with many other localities.

The special zone has a rather complete system of hospitals, clinics, and public health stations and many pharmaceutical supply installations. The number of doctors in the special zone has doubled. There is good coordination between the public health and physical education sectors and the Red Cross, which are promoting the environmental improvement movement, the "initial health care" movement, and the physical training movement. The national medical installations have achieved notable achievements in examining and treating people.

The planned parenthood movement has achieved good result, too. The population growth rate has declined from 2 percent to 1.7 percent.

Attention has been given to maintaining political security in the locality and to fulfilling the fatherland defense tasks.

In order to complete the economic and social tasks, at the very beginning, the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone Party Organization clearly determined that the tasks were to build a strong party organization, renovate the organization and operating formulas of the political system, and practice democracy and openness.

Built and reinforced from many different sources, the special zone party organization has constantly worked to increase solidarity, oppose localism and individualism, and together build a prosperous and strong locality.

Recently, the administrative apparatus has been simplified, and a number of intermediary and overlapping organizations have been eliminated. The overpopulated subwards have been divided into smaller units in accord with the requirement of building bases and strengthening the management apparatus.

The Fatherland Front and the mass organizations in the special zone have recruited many people and served as the activists in many revolutionary action movements in the locality. Along with expanding the commercial production activities of many economic elements, the mass organizations have also expanded the scope of the activities among all classes of people.

The results of renovating the organization and operational formulas of the political system depend to a great extent on implementing democracy and openness in every sphere of social life. During the past period, the special zone has made notable progress in expanding democracy and openness. The masses have boldly criticized the leadership echelons. The newspapers and stations have exposed many of the negative phenomena that have occurred in the locality. The people have been informed relatively promptly about the new policies and positions of the party and state.

Looking back at the past 10 years, it can be said that the Vung Tau-Con Dao Special Zone has done a good job in carrying out its main political task, which is to support oil and gas exploration and drilling. It has set correct directions and exploited the existing potential. It has stimulated the development of the locally-managed economy, which has developed at a rather rapid rate. It has built a number of initial material and technical bases and coordinated the economic activities with the cultural, social, security, national defense, and foreign affairs tasks. The special sector's cadres are maturing and gaining the trust of people. More and more positive factors are appearing in the revolutionary mass movements. Democracy and openness have been expanded. The party and administrative organizations and the mass organizations are being strengthened more and more.

However, there are still many shortcomings, weaknesses, and difficulties that must be overcome. The accumulated capital and commodity production capabilities in the locality are very limited. There is still a serious imbalance in the locality's economy. The banks frequently lack cash. Overage and continuous debts are very widespread.

Materials are stagnating in the warehouses and cannot be sold quickly. Thousands of laborers need jobs. Little progress has been made in stabilizing and improving the material and spiritual lives of the cadres, soldiers, and laborers. Negative phenomena, social evils, and remnants of life under the old system continue to exist or spring up again.

The main reasons for these shortcomings and difficulties are: The guidance and management capabilities of the Standing Committee of the Special Zone Party Committee and of the Special Zone Peoples Committee have not kept pace with the requirements of the situation and tasks, even though capabilities have increased. There are still many weaknesses in ideological and organizational work. Discipline is weak. A number of cadres and party members lack role models in work and daily life. Besides this, the complex changes in the country's economic and social situation in general have had a great effect on the locality's situation.

A Few Thoughts on the Revolution in Production Relationships

902E0112E Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in
Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 45-50

[Article by Thanh Son]

[Text] In the past period, our country's economic and social situation has not developed in the way we had desired. This is due in part to the shortcomings in the revolution among the production forces and in the cultural and ideological revolution. But it is due mainly to the errors made in the revolution in production relationships. Thus, in order to continue building socialism, along with giving priority to expanding the production forces and carrying on the cultural and ideological revolution, the problems concerning the revolution in production relationships must be solved. But this is also a very complex ideological and political problem that requires new theoretical thinking and a willingness to act boldly in investigating things, including mentioning "paradoxes," and "allowing mistakes to be made." This is the only way to solve the problems.

With this spirit, knowing that there are limits, I would like to mention a few ideas:

1. On the targets of the revolution in production relationships:

When talking about the revolution in production relationships, we usually talk about changing the system of ownership of the means of production and shifting from a system of private ownership to a system of public ownership. Because of this, it is often thought that the target of this revolution (and also of socialist transformation) is to gradually move toward public ownership and collectivization and finally conclude the period of transition, when the national economy will have only

two forms of socialist property, that is, all-people property and collective property. Reality has shown that that viewpoint is incorrect and that this is the cause of the mistakes made in socialist transformation.

Many people say that the basic target of socialism is the expansion of commodity production aimed at building a prosperous and just society—or a prosperous people and a strong, democratic, and just country. Because of this, the revolution in production relationships does not have any targets of its own. Rather, its purpose is to ensure that production relationships are in accord with the nature and level of development of the production forces in order to promote commodity production.

The phrase “production relationships in accord with the production forces” means “given the production forces, then those are the production relationships.” If the production forces are still small, we cannot use high production relationships, and after the production forces have expanded, the production relationships must change accordingly. Life has shown that the production forces are held back not only when production relationships are backward but also when the production relationships “exceed” the level of development of the production forces.

To say that production relationships are in accord with the production forces in the country’s present situation means that we must implement a multi-faceted ownership structure, a flexible distribution principle, an equal-price exchange relationship, and a decentralized management mechanism.

2. On the ownership system:

According to classical theory, the system of ownership of the means of production is the root of exploitation. The class that controls the means of production will become the ruling class, the exploiters. Those who do not own the means of production will become hired workers, the exploited. The class that controls the means of production will distribute the goods produced based on its own interests in order to enrich itself. Because of this, in order to eliminate exploitation and bring about social equality, communists advocate eliminating private ownership and establishing a system of public ownership of the means of production with the aim of returning the means of production to the laborers so that they can control the means of production, control production, and control product distribution for their benefit. The problem of public ownership is decisive, and, therefore, communists have summarized their theory in the phrase “eliminate the system of private ownership.”

This is the theory, but what of actual practice? With an attitude of looking at things squarely and speaking the truth, I would like to raise three points:

In reality, laborers do not really understand how to control the means of production, because the land and the machinery are all all-people property managed by the

state. The laborers have only the right to use the property, not to own it. The concepts of “peasants controlling the fields,” “workers controlling the enterprises,” and “working for oneself,” are too abstract and so they haven’t had a concrete effect.

In actuality, the laborers do not see how to transform themselves from “workers” to “masters.” All they have seen is a change in form. In the past, they worked for the capitalists and landlords; now they work for the state, for their enterprise, and for their cooperative. What is ironical is that they earn less today than they did in the past. The real wages (not real income) of the laborers before the transformation were sufficient to support them for about 15 days, and before the “contract 10,” the peasants received about 20-30 percent of the products that they produced. (Politically, ownership is clearer, but this is still just a matter of form.)

In reality, state property is public property. It does not belong to me, to you, or to any one person. Public property also has the meaning “ownerless property,” “everybody’s business is nobody’s business,” and “many watchmen but no one to close the door.” As a result, there is waste, corruption, dependence on others, and a lack of responsibility. Many peasants feel that in the past, they did not dare owe anyone for very long, because that was a private debt. But now, they owe the collective or state and so they do not feel that they have to rush to pay the debt. Is this why the peasants are in debt to the state and why the villages, districts, and provinces are in debt to the central echelon?

If the above explanation is correct or almost correct, we can mention a number of new viewpoints on the ownership system given our country’s present situation:

It is possible to use a multi-faceted ownership structure in which private and collective ownership are widespread and state ownership is concentrated in only a number of very important spheres. The state must invest in building and controlling key economic bases in order to regulate the economy within the socialist orbit. The state should build only those economic bases that private individuals can’t build or that they don’t want to build because of the small profit to be made.

Put a different way, if we implement a policy that manifests a spirit of socialist self control and that allows each person, each family, and the economic elements to carry out, balance, and develop things themselves, maintain their own lives, produce many commodities for society, and pay business taxes to the state, the state won’t have to invest much, but it will still be able to control the economy and society in accord with the target of “prosperous, strong, and fair.” That is an “intelligent” policy and an ideal model that we should use.

Given the conditions of socialism, naturally, to whom the means of production belong is an important point. But even more important is to whom the national income belongs. The state needs to control only a

number of basic production materials (energy, for example) in order to distribute the national income. That is, the state can allow people and the economic elements to use the various means to engage in production and business, produce many commodities for society, and pay business taxes to the state. The state will use wage and income tax policies in order to ensure social fairness and prevent people from becoming too rich.

Only by using suitable forms, uniting ownership rights with business rights in reality, tying general assets to specific owners, and enabling the laborers to become masters of the means of production and work for themselves will commercial production become active and achieve results. For example, in agriculture, besides the contract form, the state can implement a policy of renting land to the farmers on a long-term basis (40-50 years). During that period, they will regard that land as their land and search for ways to produce many products and commodity products. As for the workers, the assets of the enterprises can be turned over to them to use. They can carry on commercial production and pay taxes to the state. They can change the form of the assets, but they must maintain and expand the value of the state's assets.

3. Distribution relationships:

Previously, it was often stressed that ownership relationships determined distribution relationships. But life has shown that distribution relationships also have a great effect on ownership relationships. And in a number of cases, they have a decisive effect, because if distribution is not carried out properly, ownership relationships will become formalistic. In many places and at many times, the peasants have not shown much concern for the land, and the workers have not been close to the enterprises. Thus, the distribution policy must be renovated in accord with the following viewpoints and principles:

Previously, from public ownership and public management, we emphasized public interests and slighted individual interests, which killed economic motivation. Reality has shown that in the final analysis, all three interests are the interests of the laborers. But laborers are usually more concerned about direct interests. Thus, in distribution, attention must be given to satisfying individual interests so that the laborers see that they are actually working for themselves. This is the only way to keep them tied to creative work and labor.

The distribution formulas must be simple and easy to understand. As for industry (including the elements), the state must receive a percentage of the newly created value ($v + m$). As for the remaining amount, the enterprises must decide how much to distribute to the workers to maintain the labor strength and how much to accumulate to expand production.

In agriculture, the state should collect only 10 percent in taxes. As for the remaining amount, the cooperatives

must decide how much to distribute, but they must ensure that the farmers receive at least 50 percent of the products produced.

Important forms of distribution are the business tax and the income tax. Studies must be made, and tax collection methods must be implemented to ensure that businessmen pay taxes only one time for each job.

Without the laborers of the past, today's laborers would not be able to create new value. Because of this, socialism values both people with labor strength and people with capital and assets to invest in business. Along with distribution according to labor, which is the main principle, socialism must also implement the principle of distribution based on capital and of "capital generating profits." It must be realized that the relationship between the owners and the workers in a socialist system is not like that in a capitalist system. Here, this is a cooperative labor relationship (past and present laborers, managerial laborers, and production laborers) in order to carry on production and business. The fact that the incomes of the owners are higher than those of the workers is rational, because they contribute both capital and managerial labor. Managerial labor must be much greater than manual labor, because "a person who likes to worry is equal to a warehouse full of people who like to do manual labor."

Fairness in socialism is relative, because people have different opportunities and starting points and production standards in general are low. Our immediate target is to ensure that everyone has a minimum standard of living, ensuring, for example, that the average per capita income is at least \$500-600 per year. Because labor conditions, work methods (legitimate), and skills are different, some will prosper before others and some will be wealthier than others. A difference of 5-10 times is normal and must be accepted. The state must implement policies to encourage each person to enrich himself. At the same time, it must use the income tax system to prevent some people from becoming too rich.

4. Managerial relationships:

To talk about managerial relationships during a period of renovation is actually to talk about renovating management, abolishing the bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies management mechanism, and building the socialist commercial management mechanism. During the past period, the resolution of the Third Plenum of the Central Committee and the specific decisions of the Council of Ministers have addressed this problem. But it must be recognized that in accord with the spirit of these documents, the two mechanisms, the old one and the new one, continue to be carried on simultaneously. We have not switched entirely to the commercial mechanism. That is difficult to avoid during the renovation process, but we cannot think that we have completed renovation. Thus, in order to renovate management, we must continue to make preparations for

having just one commercial mechanism. The basic elements of this mechanism are:

The commercial units and the state management units must be regarded as two separate systems, not as one system. Because of this, the ministries are not the echelon directly above the enterprises. The work of the state must be kept separate from the work of the enterprises. Administration must be kept separate from commercial activities. The state must regulate the economy. This can be compared to coaching a soccer match. In this, the state is the referee, the managerial regulations are like the rules of soccer, and the enterprises are the players.

The state must regulate and control the economy at the macro level using:

Strategies and national economic plans.

Economic laws.

Regulatory tools and macrocosmic stimulants.

Education, investigation, and punishment.

The economic units subordinate to the economic elements are the commodity production subjects. They are independent businesses. From now on, their fate no longer depends entirely on the orders and directives of higher echelons. These businesses must operate based on the principle of capital self-sufficiency. They must pay their own expenses and suffer the losses.

The relationship between the state and the economic units will no longer be based on plans and orders. (And it will not be based on contract orders. If goods need to be ordered, this will be done by the state's economic organizations, not the state.) Instead, this will be based on the business tax laws. Within the framework of the state's laws, the commercial enterprises will be allowed to manage things independently and carry on trade freely. They will balance and expand things themselves and have the right to do whatever is necessary, rational, and profitable, including engaging in import-export activities directly and agreeing on prices in order to fulfill the business plans and pay business taxes to the state.

The three pressing problems in renovating management are: To unify thinking and action based on the guideline of renovating everything and not doing things halfway (as discussed above); to organize things and conduct tests widely in order to gain experience in building the new mechanism; and to reorganize things and train two types of cadres, state management cadres and business management cadres.

5. Exchange relationships:

The reason for mentioning this problem is to ensure that the revolution in production relationships aims at the right targets in expanding the multi-faceted commodity

economy. To talk about the exchange relationships in commodity production is to talk about commodity and market relationships.

The purpose of commodity production is produce goods to sell, not to produce goods that will be consumed by the producers. Thus, to talk about commodities is to talk about trading and about the relationship between goods and money. Money must be used as the means of circulation. Trading must be carried on using money. Goods are tied to money, and purchasing is tied to selling according to the principle "payment of money and delivery of goods."

Theory and practice have shown that exchange in kind between the state and the peasants has resulted in the state losing more than it has gained. About 15-20 percent of the materials have been lost because of failing to collect sufficient agricultural products. The capital has stagnated in the materials for 6 months. The commodity materials sent have not always been in accord with the specific needs of the peasants and so they have resold the materials. This has given rise to more traders, who have profited from the price differential. Because of this, the system of exchanges in kind must be abolished and replaced by a commodity-money relationship.

In order to implement the commodity-money relationship, there must be commodities and money, and the commodities and money must be controlled. This must be done through trading based on commercial prices, not "supply" and "payment" based on low prices as in the past. Controlling commodities and money does not mean stockpiling goods in warehouses and keeping money in the safe. There must be a rapid turn-over of both goods and currency. The goods and money must flow from the place of production to the place of consumption by the shortest route as quickly as possible.

In order to expand production and commodity circulation, a market mechanism must be implemented. The commercial units must start from the purchasing needs and selling capabilities of the markets in order to formulate production and business plans. Every type of commodity traded at the markets must be traded at current prices.

The commodity markets are unified domestic social markets that are tied to international markets. This includes agricultural products and consumer goods markets, production materials markets, technical and service markets, currency markets, and labor markets. Scientific products are commodities, too.

The labor market use mechanism will allow people to choose occupations and work places freely and enable labor contracts to be implemented widely.

The state must manage the markets not by forbidding marketing must by expanding production and commodity circulation. The state must use mainly economic measures to manage the markets, such as building commodity markets, reorganizing the markets, eliminating

the middlemen, providing market services, and promulgating and implementing tax policies. State commerce must be made an integral part of the social markets in order to compete and struggle. Our country's markets must strive to become part of the world market.

The ideas presented above can be summarized in the following basic points:

The target of the revolution in production relationships is not revolution for its own sake. Rather, the target is to ensure that production relationships are always in accord with the production forces in order to expand commodity production. Stated another way, expanding commodity production is the target of the revolution in production relationships.

The targets of socialism are prosperity, strength, and fairness. The ownership system is the means, and because of this, this must be used in a flexible manner in order to hit the targets of socialism.

Economic interests must be regarded as the motive force of economic expansion. Much attention must be given to the interests of the laborers. The principle of "work generating income and capital generating profits" must be implemented.

Exchange in kind must be abolished. Instead, the commodity-money relationship must be implemented widely, and there must be freedom in commodity circulation.

Management must be renovated. We must switch to commercial business and implement socialist self-management. We cannot stop half-way.

The ideas presented above may be right or almost right. I hope that they contribute to finding a suitable path given our country's conditions.

The Truth and Writing About the Truth

902E0112F Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in
Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 51-54

[Article by Mai Ngu, writer]

[Text] People often say: simple as the truth. But the truth is never simple. Searching for and writing about the truth is very complex, because of the surrounding developments and because of the effect of the truth on those who search for it.

For a long time, writers frequently stressed the role of truth and used that as a criterion for their writing as well as for themselves. But that time seems to have passed. People now pay little attention to or avoid the truth. Actually, today is just the beginning in approaching the truth. The truth in life usually has two aspects, a primary aspect and a secondary aspect, good and bad, and positive and negative. How writers come upon the truth, recognize it, and expose it depends on the political, social, and aesthetic views of each person.

I remember when I toured the northern border at the beginning of 1979. My task there was to find positive factors and models in fighting to defend the fatherland. I met a retired first lieutenant in M.T. Village. When the enemy attacked, this man single-handedly held back tens of enemy troops and blocked their advance. Many minority militia troops fought very bravely even if they did not achieve very much. That is the truth, or one aspect of the truth. The other side is not as nice, that is, the command and leadership organizations in many localities simply fled. Those are the two sides of the truth.

The first lieutenant told me something very interesting: During the fighting, around noon each day, his mother, who was over 70 years old, brought rice to the battlefield for her son. His position was located on a mountain ridge near the enemy's position. While he ate, his mother stood guard and directed fire at the enemy, who were advancing stealthily. He told his mother to go home, but his mother said that she was not afraid. That moved everyone when the achievements of the province were reported. After that, he was commended as a hero of the people's armed forces.

Am I hiding the truth just because I can't remember the cowardly acts of many others and thus can't record them here? Is writing about the combat achievements of that first lieutenant the truth? I think that it is, and I think that such truths were essential to the interests of the people at that time. Thus, the truth is both essential and useful, and there are aspects that are useless and damaging. Of course, later on we can't ignore the full truth regardless of where it leads, but that is the work of historians and novelists.

Recently, someone voiced the opinion that there are two sides to everything, one of which is reserved for the authorities and one of which concerns the people. He wanted to contrast these two sides to the truth and encourage writers to involve themselves in the truth of the people. This viewpoint came into being together with the theory of "opposing forces" and the desire to form a "double-sided structure." This is outside the profession of writers and does not fall within the scope of this article.

Four months ago, the press printed a very short news item after the quality of products sold at the Hanoi department store was checked. A quality control organization subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Commerce stopped the sale of a number of types of goods such as VIHA bicycles, the transformers produced by Chinh Xac Machine Factory 1, and electric rice pots made by COVINA and HUWAL. This was a very short news item—which was probably true—but it had a great effect on customers and producers. I have not said anything about the complex changes that have taken place in checking the quality of electrical goods or the responsibilities of producers. But that short news item created great difficulties for the producers at a time when

they had to deal with the great threat posed by imported goods. Should such news items be printed?

More than 10 years ago, one person (it's said that he studied abroad) said that half a loaf of bread is still bread, but half the truth is not the truth. At first hearing, this sounds logical. But that is mediocre materialistic logic. But the truth (as discussed here) cannot be compared to a loaf of bread, because it moves objectively and is reflected in the thinking, feelings, and intelligence of man. There is no such thing as a single truth as there is a single material object. If the truth has two halves, there must also be things that can be distinguished by the terms guidance and control, with those things under guidance approached by human understanding. Here, I will mention a few events that were reported in the press last year. There was also one event that each newspaper reported in a different way, which made it impossible for readers to understand the nature of the problem.

At the end of September last year, "young writers" (although some of them were 50 and 60 years old) held a meeting in Hanoi. But based on the newspaper reports, it was impossible for readers to imagine the nature and results of that meeting. TIEN PHONG and TUOI TRE portrayed this as a major event and wonderful achievement and said that the ideas expressed at the meeting were all brand-new. Other newspapers in Hanoi reported on this in a more objective manner or criticized this sharply. In its article, TIEN PHONG edited the articles of several people and printed such attractive headlines that the authors of those articles had to clear up things by verifying the things they had originally written. And the newspaper, perhaps in an effort to broaden public opinion, sent a reporter to interview the General Secretary of the Writers' Association. But for some reason, this interview, which lasted quite a long time, was never made public. That is very difficult to understand.

The executive committee of the Vietnam Reporters Association held a meeting, too. The press in Hanoi printed many articles on this. But if a reader had read only SAIGON GIAI PHONG or TUOI TRE, he would have gotten the impression that the meeting focused exclusively on the affairs of the editor in chief of VAN NGHE (which is being reorganized). Because of that, the reader would have wondered why the Reporters Association is so concerned about the internal affairs of another association. From what I understand, that was a very disturbing article. Even prior to that, the affairs of VAN NGHE had generated much comment. Now, reporters in the south have been notified and they know the truth. Thus, the attack on the Vietnam Writers Association through the editor in chief of VAN NGHE has shifted and is now focused on a number of magazines in several central provinces. It seems that through the matter involving VAN NGHE (this is something to which readers are susceptible), people wanted to reach some goal for which all the events mentioned were just an excuse. In the final analysis, the editor in chief of VAN NGHE was just a victim in this attack.

Thus, where does truth, which we are all seeking, lie? It is being covered with nice-sounding and exotic but very appealing viewpoints. Much paper and ink and much effort on the part of printers have been spent on such arguments. Slowly, things have become clearer. The article "The Personality of Writers" by Hoang Phu Ngoc, which appeared in TIEN PHONG CHU NHAT No 4, 1989, was quite frank. What it said was "the truth."

The journey to the truth is not easy, because the truth has many shapes. Many times, it is cleverly disguised by various methods and symbols. In the past period, the press has mentioned many negative things. Thanks to the press, the organizations responsible have handled a number of situations. Readers trust the press and regard the press as their spiritual protector and as the protector of their civil rights. But recently, readers have begun questioning the accuracy of some of the stories published by the press. Because after listening to some of the things that have been reported, some of the people in those articles appear to be very wicked. And it's reported that they will be punished in accord with the law (such as Tran Xuan Hoi, the director general of the Federation of Beer Corporations). But a short time later, the information changes. Not all of those things are that important. The reporter who investigated the matter may have been interfered with for some reason. What readers need to know is what led to those negative events.

When two newspapers report on the same event and their reports differ completely, that means that the truth must lie in one direction or incline toward one side. The other, then, is a "grotesque" truth. When a matter has been settled and been disclosed by the investigating agency and law, the person who reported the wrong information cannot ignore this or act as if nothing had happened. A retraction must be printed to rectify the error. That is the only way to regain the trust of readers.

Writers are struggling for a socialist democracy. They are struggling against bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies, which weigh heavily on the people. They are also struggling for the renovation movement of the entire party and all the people. But people feel as if a number of writers are just pointing their pens at others. They see writers as standing outside all the negative events. The press and writers must be brave, above all with themselves. Bravery is not always manifested by shouting and destruction. Writers must be brave enough to search for the truth, not just in order to look for the truth and disclose it, but also in order to replace a bad truth with a good truth that is useful in building socialism. Today, it's easier to find a bad truth than it is to find a good truth. Because that is not easy, readers must turn to the press.

I feel that in many cases, when something negative has occurred, the press has gone only halfway and explained things only partly for the innocent. Or it has just helped the organizations in authority to remove the degenerate elements from their positions. The other half is still hidden and has not been disclosed. But this is necessary.

Why was Senior Colonel Phan Van Ton sentenced to 2 years in prison? And in many other cases, the question is also why. I am sure that this is not the fault of our system but of evil elements. But unless the reasons are disclosed, how can the situation be changed? The trap has been set in order to catch the innocent. All we can do is pull the victim out of the trap; we can't destroy the trap. What that means is that someone else will someday step into the trap. The truth about the trap is even more dangerous than the truth about those who have fallen into the trap. This half truth (if you can call it half) is very serious. This has done great harm, but it has also provided guidance and given writers the courage to forget themselves. The press has won victories in many struggles against negative phenomena. Many corrupt people have been removed from their positions. But have the lives of the people in those places, such as Thanh Hoa Province and Dong Tien Village, changed now that the corrupt people have been removed? Nothing will be achieved by these

struggles against negative phenomena unless these struggles achieve something else for production and the lives of the people besides the elimination of a few insects in society.

Concerning the search for the truth in the sphere of press information, there are many other things that need to be said and discussed. We are just in the initial stage. The party and the people are in the initial stage of democratizing society, and our standard of culture is not yet very high. On this path, we have great hopes in the abilities and sense of civic responsibility of writers.

Advancing Steadily

00000000 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 55-57; 88

[Nguyen Trong; article not translated]

Debate on the Role of the Human Factor in Socialist Construction

902E0112G Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 58-69

[Text] Based on the agreement signed by TAP CHI CONG SAN (Vietnam) and "COMMUNIST" (Soviet Union), a Vietnamese-Soviet debate on the "Role of the Human Factor in Socialist Construction," which was organized by TAP CHI CONG SAN, was held on 1 and 2 June 1989 in Hanoi.

Participating in the debate on behalf of the Soviet Union were representatives of COMMUNIST and the Marxist-Leninist Institute led by X.V. Kolesnikov, the deputy editor in chief of COMMUNIST. Participating on behalf of Vietnam were members of the editorial staff, a number of cadres, and a number of professors and associate professors who contribute to TAP CHI CONG SAN, scientists and others subordinate to the Marxist-Leninist Institute, and representatives from the Department of Economics of the Central Committee, Department of Science and Education of the Central Committee, the Vietnam Social Sciences Commission, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher and Vocational Education, and the Ministry of Public Health. The Vietnamese group was led by Ha Xuan Truong, the editor in chief of TAP CHO CONG SAN.

This is the second time that TAP CHI CONG SAN has organized a debate on this topic. The first debate (held in October 1986) contributed to clarifying the theoretical viewpoints on the role of the human factor and unity between economic and social policies. The second debate went deeper into the question of how laborers can become a powerful motive force in socioeconomic development. The two sides discussed their experiences in the sphere of using this important strategy.

Altogether, 14 papers were presented.

In his speech, Ha Xuan Truong, the editor in chief of TAP CHI CONG SAN, analyzed the causes of the present unstable social situation and proposed a number of measures aimed at overcoming this situation. X.V. Kolesnikov, an associate professor of history and the deputy editor in chief of COMMUNIST, discussed general problems concerning the role of the human factor in the present reform movement in the Soviet Union. Starting from the interests of individual laborers, Associate Professor Le Xuan Vu, the head of the Culture and Education Department, TAP CHI CONG SAN, discussed the need for a "system of motive forces in economics, politics, society, and culture and a spirit that will produce a synchronized effect and affect each laborer in order to liberate and expand the essential forces of mankind." N.D. Golovnin, an associate professor of economics, discussed the "ownership rights of laborers and a number of theoretical and practical problems that have arisen in the Soviet Union." Hoang Chi Bao, an associate professor of philosophy at the Marxist-Leninist Institute, criticized the serious violations of the

principle of fairness in economic interests, human rights, and rights of citizens and discussed the problem of "democratizing every sphere of life win the aim of heightening the role of the human factor in socialism in Vietnam." Professor Le Huu Tang, an associate professor of philosophy and the director of the Institute of Philosophy, which is subordinate to the Social Sciences Commission, discussed the "role of interests in stimulating the active nature of the laborers." Khong Doan Hoi, the deputy director of the Institute of Scientific Socialism, which is subordinate to the Marxist-Leninist Institute, discussed "economic man 2 years after the congress, basic changes and the large obstacles that must be overcome." Thanh Son, a high-level specialist with the Department of Economics of the Central Echelon, discussed "renovating the economic policies with the aim of manifesting the potential of the Vietnamese people." V.X. Livitsky, an associate professor of philosophy and the head of a department at the (Soviet) Marxist-Leninist Institute, and Bui Cong Trang, a specialist at the (Vietnamese) Marxist-Leninist Institute, discussed "social equality and activating the human factor in social life." E.V. Saskov, an associate professor of philosophy and the economics editor of COMMUNIST, discussed the problem of "freeing politics and economics," which is now an urgent and complex problem in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Associate Professor Pham Song, the minister of public health, mentioned that the constitution of the Vietnamese today is still far from being able to satisfy the requirements of socialist industrialization. He said that looking after the health of all the people is an urgent task of all of society. Professor Duc Minh, the deputy director of the Institute of Science and Education, discussed the matter of "individual education and the gifted people strategy." Associate Professor Pham Tat Dong, the deputy head of the Department of Department of Science and Education of the Central Committee, stressed that "educating and training laborers is actually expanded reproduction of the production forces." Education is not simply a matter of social welfare but a sphere of production that must be expanded. Associate Professor Tran Hong Quan, the minister of higher and vocational education, examined the human factor with the qualities of the "motive force of each individual in social motivation." Based on that, he discussed guidelines for training and exploiting the talents of each person.

Based on the realities of the renovation and reform movements in their own countries, those participating in the debate analyzed the reasons for the previous decline in the socioeconomic situation, affirmed the efforts made based on the renovation guidelines aimed at improving the situation, criticized the mechanism that is holding back the creative potential and positive social nature of the laborers, determined guidelines and measures, and proposed specific economic, political, social, and cultural policies aimed at manifesting the role of the human factor in building socialism.

The papers presented at the debate were given to all the participants ahead of time. Two full days were reserved for discussing the issues raised in the papers, with the participants concentrating on the two main problems: ensuring the interests and rights of the laborers in the present conditions, which requires that we start from the beginning, and improving the capabilities of the laborers (including managerial laborers and leaders) in building socialism.

Ha Xuan Truong, who presided over the debate, went straight to the heart of the problem: some Vietnamese are regressing, and social morality is declining. Urgent appeals have been made out of both pain and anger. Although we do not agree with the pessimistic view that some people have of our society, no one denies that that is the truth.

We must look for the reasons for the social chaos from the lives of the laborers and the basis for the existence and development of society. In Vietnam today, on one hand, the laborers cannot live by honest labor. They are remaining aloof from labor and are being corrupted. On the other hand, the laborers are waging a silent struggle against this corruption.

There are many reasons, but the fundamental reason is the corruption of laborers because of an incorrect viewpoint concerning the system of all-people ownership, which has led to "ownerless property." Real ownership rights must be restored to the laborers. A distinction must be made between individual and private ownership. In the socialist system, the individual is not in conflict with the collective. Private ownership (capitalism) exists side by side with collective [ownership]. Economically, private capitalism both competes with and cooperates with the state economy, cooperatives, and other forms of the socialist economy. When it is no longer needed, it will wither away by itself.

A new social culture and morality must be built. The average cultural standards of the laborers must be raised, and the capabilities of the owners of all-people property must be increased. Property and capabilities, along with democratic rights, belong to the laborers.

The negative and positive aspects of the commodity production economy—the economic basis—psychological control and the way of life of the people: Conditions must be created to stimulate the commodity production economy. At the same time, its negative aspects must be limited. A new morality must be built, and there must be unity between the economy and society, that is, conditions must be created to enable the people to develop in all respects.

X.V. Kolesnikov: I want to discuss a number of political problems and the role of the human factor in reform. The goal of reform is to exploit the creativity of the masses. Appeals for better labor will not achieve anything unless the economy is reformed and democracy is expanded. These two factors are closely related to each

other. Some people still think that economic reform must precede democratization. That is an erroneous viewpoint.

To carry on spiritual reform, we must create an ideological environment in which people have the freedom to grow. We don't need mechanical people but people with ingenuity. In our country, more attention is being given to social opinion. People are being allowed to see movies and read books that were previously banned. The press has the right to discuss the past. Those are clear results. Of course, there are still many other difficult problems that must be solved so that people can develop in all respects. Foremost are the economic, grain, and commodity problems, which are very serious problems in our country. The March plenum of the Party Central Committee looked for ways to solve these problems. The plenum put forth a program to eliminate corruption and enable the peasants to own their own land. This problem is similar to the problem discussed by Ha Xuan Truong. Cooperative forms and individual forms must exist and develop side by side.

For a long time, we ignored the social sphere and invested only the "leftovers" in it. Today, overcoming the effects of this is proving to be very difficult. In the past, we were proud of having many hospital beds, but the results were poor because we did not give enough attention to the ranks of doctors and other medical personnel. We are now reducing the budgets of other sectors in order to give more money to the public health sector. The educational sector is also being reformed, but this is proceeding very slowly.

Retired people in our country are very poor. Their average income is 75-80 rubles a month, and many people receive even less. We are taking steps to reform social welfare.

The young generation also poses a major problem. What can be done to ensure that they all start from the same point when entering life and starting school? There must be equality. We will soon promulgate a youth law, but that does not mean that we will have solved this problem completely. That will just provide us with a legal basis for taking action.

As for the political system, as Marx and Lenin said, this is a matter of liberating the people. During the time of Stalin, obedience at the upper echelon became the common behavior of society as a whole, and this destroyed individual creativity. Today, people can think freely. However, not everything is going smoothly. Many complex problems have arisen. Eloquent proof of this is that during the recent election and at the Congress of People's Delegates, a wide variety of ideas were expressed. Unfortunately, many people want to return to the old methods, which were rigid and oppressive. We hope that through the school of democracy, the situation will quickly stabilize at a higher level.

I would like to return to the problem mentioned by Ha Xuan Truong, that is, stability or instability. To overcome sluggishness and advance to peaceful stability, the bureaucratic state must be reorganized and turned into a socialist legal state. That is the only way to stabilize the economy, politics, and the other spheres.

Tran Hong Quan: Truong posed a theoretical problem about which I am still unclear, that is, moving from ownerless collective property to owned property.

I would like to ask X.V. Kolesnikov: Democratization in the socialist countries is taking place in various ways. The goal is to energize all of society. But we must also stabilize society. A foreign administrator said that an "enlightened dictatorship is preferable to a muddle-headed democracy." Of course, that is not right, but comparing the democratization processes in the various countries, can't we draw a lesson from that?

X.V. Kolesnikov: I would like to respond to the question asked by Tran Hong Quan. Ha Xuan Truong talked about property rights and about eliminating labor corruption. The peasants must have land, the workers must have factories, and engineers must have laboratories. That is collective property and so can corruption be eliminated? Regardless of the social form, can that be carried out, for example in communications? And what about the problem of intellectual property?

Ha Xuan Truong: We oppose private ownership, which is the root of labor corruption. I don't think that restoring property to the laborers means dividing the assets as, for example, collective property is divided among members of the collective. How can the laborers control the means of production directly? We implemented Resolution 10 on agriculture: Contracts and bids are the forms to enable the peasants to control their means of production. At the enterprises, contracts can also be used with the laborers. That will ensure that the laborers are close to the enterprise and that they take responsibility for the final product. In communications, as X.V. Kolesnikov said, in Vietnam many of our roads are in a state of disrepair, because the people don't view the roads as their property. The communications sector has given the villages along the roads quotas for managing and repairing road sections. I don't think that this is dividing the assets among the laborers. There must be a new mechanism to guarantee the interests of the laborers and enable them to take responsibility for the assets and means of production. If this problem is solved using some other method, it will be capitalism. But doing things the way they were done before will put us back in the same situation as our forefathers.

Tran Hong Quan: This is just a mechanism for using the means of production.

Ha Xuan Truong: Ownership has three aspects: use, appropriation, and transfer. Socialism opposes private appropriation. Use and transfer can be handled using many forms. The family economy is also a form of socialist ownership. Families have the right to use and

transfer property. But transferring things to people requires the creation of property for society.

Khong Doan Hoi: The Soviet Union rents out land for 50 years. In Vietnam, the Nam Bo Delta poses a problem: Should people have the right to sell the land given them? In reality, people have sold land. My view is that people should be allowed to sell the land. Assume that I am skilled in handicrafts. I sell the land in order to engage in the handicrafts trade. The land is concentrated in the hands of people who are skilled in farming. That is beneficial, but does it violate the sacred principle of socialism?

I would like to ask X.V. Kolesnikov to talk more about pluralism.

X.V. Kolesnikov: You have all asked about democratization, the economy, and pluralism. Let's take turns answering.

History provides lessons on the problem of stability and democracy. To achieve this, we must build a legal state. No force can solve every problem immediately. I do not approve of dictatorship. The best thing is a wise democratic collective.

There are many different ideas about socialist pluralism. But there are three principles that cannot be violated: Do not exploit other people, do not enslave other peoples, and do not over exploit nature. If most people want to return to capitalism, then that is bad pluralism.

N.D. Golovnin: Ownership is a very complex and variegated problem. There are many different opinions about this, but there is unity on a number of points. Most economists and lawyers support equality between collective, state, and private ownership. New viewpoints on ownership have appeared in cooperative law and laws on state enterprises. The workers and labor cooperatives are the owners. While theoreticians are busy debating how to coordinate state, collective, and individual interests, reality has shown that all that is necessary is to pay taxes. A number of enterprises have drafted their own regulations. This shows that theory must move faster.

Is allowing the peasants to sell land contrary to the principles of socialism? This question is being debated vigorously in the Soviet Union also. But we haven't reached a conclusion yet. I don't think that private ownership is socialist ownership. But does this ownership conflict with socialism? According to Lenin, when power is concentrated in the hands of the state, socialism will not be threatened, even if private capitalism continues to exist. We are allowing the peasants to rent land for up to 50 years. If this form of ownership is effective, it will be good for socialism, too. Another problem that has arisen is how to manufacture machinery in accord with family production. If industry cannot solve this problem quickly, family production will not expand.

Tran Hong Quan: In the Soviet Union, in pluralism, is there a separation of powers? Would you say a little more about the legal state?

X.V. Kolesnikov: A legal state requires that the laws be implemented strictly. In our country, in many cases the laws are twisted, and there is even "telephone power." If there is "telephone power," there is no legal state. To build a legal state, a Supreme Soviet must be built, the highest legal entity. It will draft laws and elect a Council of Ministers and a council chairman. In the past, the Council of Ministers spent money freely, but now the Supreme Soviet examines the budget.

The local soviets must also have real power. The courts are an independent body. Previously, if a person was unjustly accused, he didn't know to whom to appeal. Now, the courts will resolve the matter. Today, a complaint can be lodged only against individuals. But people will soon be able to file complaints against an organization. Citizens must be regarded as fellow travelers of the state. The state must satisfy the needs of citizens. In the past, the state was high above, and the people were down below. Now, this does not need to be reversed, but the two must be at the same level. Building a legal state is very difficult. This requires a new culture and a new politics.

N.D. Golovnin: I would like to add something to that. Political reform is directly related to the economic and ownership problems. Economic accounting and mutual funds will create many other forms. The National Assembly must take responsibility for making people sensitive about the economy. It must examine things to ensure that the state budget is being used effectively. This is a mutual relationship.

Thanh Son: I fully support the idea of having many ownership forms as mentioned by our Soviet comrades. But family ownership is the best. Families will work for themselves and master business activities. If peasants with only 5 percent of the land produce 70 percent of the income, that is not contrary to the sacred principles of socialism. In the past, the role of the family was ignored, but today it must be given attention. In Vietnam, instead of just 5 percent, 20 percent of the land must be issued, or perhaps sold, to the families. That means that 20 percent of the land will be privately owned, and 80 percent will be publicly owned and rented out for long periods. The results of this 20 percent will probably be two-three times higher than the other 80 percent.

Tran Hong Quan: In the Soviet Union, how is the party reorganizing the political system? Is there an unwritten law on the role of the party?

X.V. Kolesnikov: There is a written body of law, and there is what happens in reality. Article 6 of the constitution states that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the leader, but after each congress, the power of the party is increased. The party is in the vanguard politically. The leadership forms must change frequently

in accord with the actual situation. We have said countless times that power must be fixed but that the party must continue to lead the economy and every other sphere. The apparatus of the Party Central Committee consists of 23 departments. Each department is a replica of a department. There is even a Chemicals Department.

Ha Xuan Truong: The same thing is true here.

X.V. Kolesnikov: We are now building a new mechanism. The party plays a vanguard role politically. There is no written document stating the powers of the party. Some people think that there should be a separate law on the party. For a long time, the party has been above criticism. Now the people frequently criticize the party. The party must talk with the people and, through specific tasks, prove its leadership ability.

Thanh Son: I think that ownership is just a means, not a target. The target is to improve living conditions and increase social justice. Regarding ownership as the means makes it easier to solve the problem. If ownership is a means, regardless of whether it is public or private ownership, the people can still be prosperous and the country can be strong. I agree with X.V. Kolesnikov when he said that as long as the three principles are not violated (do not exploit people, do not enslave other peoples, and do not exploit nature excessively), there can be free debate. But the concept of exploitation must be defined clearly.

For a long time, we have attached value only to living laborers, not to past laborers. I think that both types are valuable. Can those who spend capital to hire manpower be viewed as exploiters? The old view was that capitalists just exploited people and that they did nothing but "sit around enjoying the fruits of the work of others." Reality shows that the labor of the capitalists is very complex and demanding. Our directors have been very concerned ever since we promulgated a law on the independence of enterprises. An old saying in Vietnam is: "One person to worry for a storehouse of workers."

Ha Xuan Truong: The exploitation problem is a current problem that is being discussed in our country. The Sixth Plenum of the Party Central Committee affirmed that party members must not exploit others. Party members are cadres, workers, and civil servants and must not create problems. The question is how to evaluate peasant party members and party members outside the state staff who have capital and hire workers. One party member in Hanoi requested to leave the party in order to carry on a business. He had an enterprise that employed approximately 200 workers. The Hanoi Municipal CPV Committee persuaded him to stay in the party and continue his business in his own way.

E.V. Saskov: Unless it's a secret, what is the name of that person?

Tran Hong Quan: His name is Bach Minh Son, an engineer with the BIMEXCO Corporation. He invented

a roofing material made of plastic. A number of organizations helped him put this into production. But the state mechanism acted very slowly. He acted independently in order to attract capital and hire workers. Today, his company has more than 10 billion dong and exports goods.

V.X. Livitsky: I would like to talk about social justice. The interests of the collective and of the group are now a problem in many countries, including the capitalist countries. In the Soviet Union, this problem has arisen in many forms. Although a number of enterprises have implemented measures to increase retirement pay and pay additional amounts to women who are caring for small children, most enterprises do not have the capabilities to do that. Thus, solving the social problems depends on the workplace of the individual, not on how you work.

Recently, a person who worked at a cooperative said that each month he received 3 million rubles and paid the party 90,000 rubles. Many people say that in a socialist system, no one should earn more than 1,500 times the average wage. Others say that if that person earned that money legally, that's fine. Thus, there is a serious conflict between social fairness and results. In order to achieve high results, there must be guidelines. But people are afraid that these guidelines will go beyond the bounds of socialism. Nowhere in the classics of Marx and Lenin or in party documents does it say that in socialism, problems concerning income will not arise. Reality has taught us that to increase production quickly and to make people work enthusiastically, people must be suitably rewarded for the labor expended. According to the traditional viewpoint, the difference in wages should not be too large. Those who work at state enterprises have become jealous of those who work for cooperation teams and the private sector and who earn high incomes. Attention must be given to this psychological point when providing material incentives.

There are now two tendencies. X.V. Kolesnikov has already talked about gradually improving the standard of living of those with low incomes and giving attention to the wages of the poor. The fairest thing is to allow the laborers to raise their standard of living through their own labor.

The second tendency is to implement policies for those with high incomes. No ceiling should be put on the maximum that people can earn. But they must be subject to a progressive income tax. We are vigorously debating a draft document on this progressive tax system. In my view, society needs many progressive people with a head for production in order to expand social production. It must be admitted that this has negative aspects. Those with high incomes will have a different way of life. Those looking at this will have a different psychology and different views. Some say that that will set an example; others say that this is excessive. I think that life will teach us how to handle the relationship between social fairness

and results to ensure that society maintains both humanity and high production results.

Bui Cong Trang: In Leningrad, there are 50,000 millionaires. What is your viewpoint on the appearance of millionaires?

X.V. Kolesnikov: Some say that there are 100,000 millionaires. But this figure has not been checked. I think that that is something positive.

Bui Cong Trang: Is it fair if someone has income not from wages but from an inheritance or bank interest?

V.X. Livitsky: No one has calculated what percentage is from labor and what percentage has been inherited. Commodity production will create a large difference in incomes. Talented people will help move society forward. Of course, the sources of large assets must be distinguished, but wealth created by labor is legitimate. Wealth not created by labor, such as an inheritance, must be examined. Marx and Engels opposed inheritances. Today, we cannot take away the right to inherit wealth. The desire by parents to leave their possessions to their children is widespread and rational. The good thing for society is that wealthy people will save money and leave it for the next generation. In the future, we can think about implementing a progressive tax on inherited property.

N. D. Golovnin: The interest earned from bank deposits does not keep pace with the drop in the value of the currency. What we call share certificates are not the same thing as share certificates in the capitalist countries. Here, you deposit a certain amount of money and receive a piece of paper and some interest.

E.V. Saskov: A number of enterprises have begun selling share certificates at 15 percent interest, which is five times what the banks pay.

Bui Cong Trang: In the Soviet Union, is there a market-manpower problem in commodity production?

N. D. Golovnin: A number of scholars say that manpower can be considered to be a commodity. Others feel that in the socialist system, manpower cannot be regarded as a commodity. I think that manpower can be regarded as a commodity, but the buyer is always the state. Refusing to view manpower as a commodity is not logical. If production tools are commodities, then manpower is a commodity, too.

X.V. Kolesnikov: That is not true of socialism but of the transitional stage, the formative stage of socialism. In reality, a number of socialist countries regard manpower as a commodity. But they are not completely socialist.

Le Xuan Vu: I regard manpower as a commodity, because the exchange here is also an exchange of property. I don't think that regarding manpower as a commodity is a property of the transitional stage or that it is not socialist. We must get rid of the old viewpoints on socialism. In the past, it was thought that socialism did

not have commodity production. Now we do. Of course this is planned commodity production. If directors have the right to select workers, why can't manpower be sold? If manpower is sold at a high price because of the great contribution it makes to society, that must be viewed as a step forward by socialism.

Khong Doan Hoi: How can people earn an income without working? Should we use that concept or should we just use the concept of legitimate and illegitimate income?

V.X. Livitsky: The term income from labor is used in a very broad sense. Reality shows that we must go beyond this problem even though no one has made a formal announcement. There are no standards by which to evaluate whether income is from labor or not. This term is outmoded, but getting rid of it is not easy.

N. D. Golovnin: I would like to mention another type of income of those in the state sector whose products do not benefit society at all. Some people try to find ways to steal public property. Others look for ways to produce "secret" goods. Between these people and those who receive an income without working, I don't know who is more evil.

Le Huu Tang: What is exploitation? Is income legal or illegal? Should people be allowed to hire manpower? Is manpower a commodity? In recent years, these questions have been debated vigorously in Vietnam and the Soviet Union. But we have not been able to find an answer. This has had a great influence on formulating policies and positions. There is the socialism discussed by Marx and Engels and the socialism that we are living. Vietnam is in a transitional period. The Soviet Union announced that it had completed socialist construction in 1936. But that was not the socialism as formulated by Marx and Engels. If we are just on the path to socialism, the solutions to these problems will be different. For example, in building a two-story house, if the first story is capitalism and the second story is socialism as envisaged by Marx and Engels, the means of production are public property and there is no exploitation. We are building a two-story house, too, but it is a house on stilts. The second story is also called socialism, but this is a different type of socialism. Theory must be in accord with reality. There must be a transitional intermingling of forms. This is unavoidable. In building a just society, we must accept the fact that some things will be unfair. There will be exploitation and inequality. There is no other way to explain this concept.

X.V. Kolesnikov: Our press has vigorously debated the question of whether or not we have achieved complete socialism. The debates and efforts to find socialism have not achieved anything. In my view, for the past 70 years, the Soviet Union has been in a transitional stage. The reform movement is a revolution unlike previous revolutions. We can accept many different forms.

V.X. Livitsky: I am delighted by the ideas expressed here. In holding debates, we often express many different

viewpoints, such as that socialism has not yet been perfected or that Marx, Engels, and Lenin were wrong. Some, basing their views on reality, say that what has been built is socialism. Every viewpoint has its excesses.

The socialist model sketched by the classicists does not show the form. Lenin said that socialism is the first stage of communism. In the debate, people have mechanically used the standards of a very high stage to analyze a lower stage. Marx and Engels built their theory through criticizing the capitalist society of that period. They emphasized eliminating exploitation and private ownership. A number of researchers call the socialism developed by Marx and Engels critical socialism. Many times, I get the feeling that the society that we are building is not a socialist society but a society that is contrary to capitalism. Socialism must be built based on capitalism, not outside capitalism. The mission of capitalism was to move society forward another step. Marx and Engels said that socialism must be built on industrial production. When making comparisons, we should not forget these special characteristics.

Tran Hong Quan: I would like to discuss the human factor from the standpoint of individual motivation. If social motivation is the general vector, each individual is the shape that creates that vector. For a long time now, we have ignored or been prejudiced against the development of individual motivation. It's as if we wanted to conceal the role of the individual and merge the individual with the collective. Individual motivation depends on three factors: ideals, conscience, and love of vocation; the pressures of social factors; and individual rights and interests. In Vietnam, this third factor is often slighted.

The individual had to be sacrificed during the stage of national independence, but things must be different now that we are in the stage of economic construction. Recently, we have forgotten the spiritual factor. In the past, we were able to mobilize all the people to save the country, because the shame felt at losing the country motivated everyone. Now, we must motivate people by the disgrace of poverty. There must be a new slogan in order to arouse the patriotism of each person and motivate each person to manifest his creative talents and labor zeal to make the country prosperous.

In Vietnam, for a long time now, the human factor has been much more important than the law. Morality, the glue of society, has been slighted. Religious belief is not always a negative factor. At a certain level, dogma can teach people to act properly.

Individual motivation depends to a great extent on individual capabilities. From this, we can see the mistake: In the past, we preferred laborers who had little ability but who could be ordered about easily. Today, we must develop individual capabilities to the maximum. There is no reason to fear developing the individual factor to the point where we can't set a direction for it.

We must have faith that revolutionary ideals are sufficiently attractive in order to set the direction for it.

Looking at the ranks of laborers like a social motive force, what do we see? Vietnam is facing a serious challenge. Our starting point is very low and our rate of development is very slow at a time when the Asia-Pacific region is developing very quickly. The countries in the rear have encountered many difficulties, and they run the danger of being pushed into a hole. The reality is that Vietnam is being exploited on world markets. There is the danger that we will become a "Robinson" in the 21st Century, but there is also a great opportunity. Vietnam is fertile ground for the investors of the world. There are many things that make us attractive. We have resources and an intelligent and clever labor force. Given these conditions, Vietnam must persevere on the road to socialism and take shortcuts by relying on its strength, its laborers.

Our country has few resources. There is little oil or gas, and land is scarce. But large investments must be made. We lack capital, but that problem is not difficult to solve. The Common Market countries, which have a surplus of \$4 trillion, are looking for markets in which to invest. We have a labor force to make effective use of that investment capital.

Labor must be viewed as the key factor. In building an economy directed toward exports, the basic thing is to export live labor. The immediate things are processing, services, and commodity production. Industries must be built in the rural areas. We must take another look at agriculture and not engage in agriculture at any price. The surplus laborers in the rural areas must go to work in industry, beginning with construction and processing. This requires skilled laborers.

The economic race in the world today is a scientific and technical race. The countries that are developing rapidly have all reformed training. The speed of training in Vietnam today is the slowest in the world. Only 10 percent of the laborers have served as apprentices. Our predictions indicate that this pace is very dangerous. For example, we have only 2.8 doctors per 10,000 people as compared with 17-33 doctors per 10,000 people in the socialist countries of average development. Only one-third of our general school teachers meet the standards. The majority of our managerial cadres have not been trained or they have received only a little training. We have only 1.5 million skilled laborers. That is not enough for industrialization.

There is little money to invest in training. If the per capita world investment in training is 1,000, in Vietnam it is only five. Ours is equal to only 2.5 percent of that of the developing countries. In Vietnam, investments in college students are equal to only 1.8 percent of those in Thailand.

Many new training formulas are being developed, and money is being attracted from many sources. This is creating favorable conditions that will enable education

to keep pace with the growing size of the population. But all this depends on investment. Unfortunately, although everyone recognizes this danger and although everyone talks about the human strategy, no one regards man as the center of the problem.

V.X. Livitsky: As a minister, to what extent have you manifested this point? I would like to know more about manifesting traditions, the use of labor sources, and the intelligence and diligence of the Vietnamese people.

Tran Hong Quan: I have done two things. First, I have tried to make everyone see that education is at a critical point. Second, I have quietly made reforms. Our reforms are in accord with the trends. Our thinking and policies must not be backward, but we often joke that "cold water doesn't gush into the lake." You can't achieve everything by will power alone. This is why we haven't achieved much.

The Vietnamese people have both great advantages and many shortcomings. They have inherited their ancestors' genes for intelligence and cleverness. This has been proven many times, including by students studying abroad. During the past period, our mechanism has hurt our diligence. Besides this, we fought a long war, and the generations have not been able to continue the traditions, particularly occupational traditions. Another weakness is that it is very difficult for us to cooperate with each other. Paternalism and localism are still prevalent. We have not gone through capitalist economic production and so we can't see economic management capabilities clearly. In training people, we are striving to manifest the strengths and overcome these weaknesses.

Nguyen Duc Minh: I would like to say a little more about diligence. We are very worried that this tradition will disappear. Psychological studies show that we can save this. In our schools, we are striving to teach labor, but theory is still emphasized at the expense of practice. On the other hand, there is a shortage of jobs, but the population continues to increase rapidly.

Conditions and Environment for Maintaining the Commercial Independence of the State Enterprises

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[Complete text of a seminar organized by TAP CHI CONG SAN on 16 and 17 June 1989]

[Text] Implementing the resolution of the Sixth Party Congress on renovating and strengthening the role of the state-operated economy in a multi-faceted economy, the party and state have promulgated many resolutions, including (draft) Resolution 306 of the Politburo, the resolution of the Third Plenum (Sixth Term) of the CPV Central Committee, and Council of Ministers Resolution 217, with the aim of creating the preconditions necessary to switch the state-operated economic units to cost accounting in accord with the viewpoint of developing a multi-faceted planned economy.

In implementing the above resolutions, the state-operated economic units have made progress in organizing the production plans and balancing materials and product distribution. In a number of spheres, they have removed the fetters of the bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies mechanism.

Although the state-operated economy in our country has had an advantage over the other economic elements in terms of position, capital, materials, and labor for a long time now, in reality, state-operated enterprises in general have suffered losses. They have not manifested a guiding role in the economy or escaped the fetters of the old mechanism with a bureaucratic apparatus closely tied to special rights and interests.

It can be said that at the macro-economic level, the bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies mechanism has not yet been fully eliminated and continues to play a role throughout society. Looking at the economic situation in our country, in many respects the economy continues to change in bad ways. Since the beginning of 1989, a number of state enterprises have shown their ability to operate independently in difficult conditions. But many other state enterprises are facing great dangers. Production and commodities are stagnating, the enterprises lack liquid assets, materials, and cash, and the workers do not have jobs or money.

In order to get out of this crisis, the only thing that we can do is to continue renovation. The resolution of the Sixth Plenum of the CPV Central Committee (Sixth Term) stated that we must: "Renovate the economic management mechanism and switch the economic units to cost accounting in accord with the concept of developing a multi-faceted planned commodity economy and moving toward socialism." We cannot return to the old mechanism. We must move forward by manifesting the intellectual potential of our scientific cadres and managers so that they can contribute to clarifying a number of problems concerning theory and practice and find solutions in order to overcome the present difficult situation.

Participating at the scientific debate were a number of directors-general and directors of enterprise federations and enterprises and a number of economists, leaders, and journalists. They discussed the topic "Conditions and Environment for Maintaining the Commercial Independence of the State Enterprises."

Problems Discussed at the Debate

After studying 40 plans on "conditions and environment for maintaining the commercial independence of the state enterprises" submitted by the sectors, organizations, colleges, research institutes, and scientists and managers, the organizational committee integrated the plans and posed the problems to be discussed during the debate.

Besides problems concerning the state economy and the causes of these problems and the guiding role of the state

economy during the initial state of the transition to socialism, the organizational committee gave its own opinions on the following two problems in order to open the debate:

a. Conditions and environment for maintaining the commercial independence of the state enterprises:

a.1. On the preconditions for switching the enterprises to cost accounting:

These preconditions include isolating the functions of representative masters and specific masters regarding all-people ownership. With credentials as the representative owner for all-people ownership, the state must carry out its function of guiding and regulating the commercial production activities of the state economic units, but without interfering with the commercial production activities of these enterprises. The labor collectives in the state economic units are the specific masters with respect to the property subject to all-people ownership. They have the right to use the property that they manage in order to carry on commercial activities in accord with the contracts signed with the state. They are responsible for repaying the initial capital and multiplying this capital, liquidating debts, and paying taxes to the state.

a.2. Existing conditions of the commercially-independent state enterprises:

Contracts with the state (issued registration certificate).

Financial conditions (capital issued, payments, capital mobilized).

Commercial conditions (adjusting to markets).

Organizational conditions within the state enterprises (selection and election of a director, management council, congress of workers and civil servants).

a.3. Environment of the state enterprises:

Legal environment.

Psychological environment.

Information environment.

Markets.

The state's management apparatus and mechanism.

Here, "environment" refers to the objective conditions and the factors outside the enterprise that can affect the survival and growth of the state enterprises in carrying on commercial production in an independent manner.

b. Urgent solutions aimed at saving the state economic sector and moving the enterprises to a commercial environment:

This was the heart of the debate. A summary of the guidelines mentioned the following 10 solutions:

b.1. Classify the state enterprises:

Type 1 state enterprises: These have switched to independent cost accounting concerning capital, they have the ability to liquidate the debts and fulfill their obligation to the budget, they have accumulated capital in order to expand production, and they can improve the workers' standard of living.

Type 2 state enterprises: This includes enterprises that have managed to survive thanks to the price differential, with false profits and real losses. But if the problems concerning materials, capital, prices, and product distribution are solved, these enterprises can overcome the difficulties, liquidate their debts, and expand.

Type 3 state enterprises: For many reasons, these enterprises no longer have any reason to exist.

b.2. Inventory the assets and fully determine the sources of capital of the state enterprises and sign contracts the state (divided into three steps):

Step 1: Make a general inventory of the assets of the type 3 state enterprises in order to determine the total value of the assets and sources of capital. Handle things in accord with the following two plans:

Hold bids so that the state can recover its capital.

Rent out the enterprises so that the state can recover its capital within a specific period of time.

Step 2: Make a general inventory of the assets of the type 2 state enterprises and handle things in accord with suitable plans.

Step 3: Make a general inventory of the assets of the type 1 state enterprises. Sign contracts and determine how long it will take to pay back the state.

b.3. Establish assistance funds for the state enterprises: Based on making inventories, holding bids, renting out places, settling accounts, and recovering capital, assistance funds must be established for the type 2 enterprises during the process of switching to cost accounting.

b.4. Implement the statistical and accounting regulations: After signing contracts with the state enterprises, the statistical-accounting measures must be carried out strictly so that the state can inspect the operations of the enterprises based on the implementation of the new tax policy.

b.5. Implement the new tax policy, which includes an asset tax, a raw materials use tax, a land tax, and an income tax.

b.6. Reorganize the finance and banking apparatus and expand the currency market:

Immediately reorganize the outmoded tax collection system.

Perfect the banking system and switch to currency operations.

Expand the currency market to include many elements, promote the capital circulation process, put an end to authoritarianism, and create favorable conditions for units and individuals to deposit and withdraw money quickly and easily.

b.7. Reorganize the state economic apparatus:

At the central echelon, besides the functional ministries, the special-sector ministries that perform state economic management functions must be streamlined.

The local authorities must be solidified and efforts must be concentrated on collecting taxes, protecting the environment, and building the educational and cultural infrastructure, roads and houses, and commercial operations support services.

b.8. Urgently train commercial management cadres in accord with the new economic model.

b.9. Organize a market information system.

b.10. Urgently promote drafting and disclosing economic laws and constantly revise these laws during the implementation process: Immediate steps must be taken to draft economic, labor, tax, and banking laws. In drafting these laws, it is not necessary to seek perfection, because they will be revised during the implementation process.

Theoretical and Practical Problems Discussed During the Debate

During the debate, there were arguments about the following theoretical and practical questions:

1. During the initial stage of the transitional period, does the state-operated economy play a leading role?

The majority of those participating in the debate said that the state-operated economy can play a leading role during the initial stage of the transitional period, because it has advantages in terms of equipment, capital, and cadres, and technical workers have been trained and hold key positions in the state-operated economy. The state-operated economy must play a leading role in order to serve as the activist in carrying on joint operations with the other economic elements and in guiding these elements so that they develop on the socialist path.

A number of others said that during the initial stage of the transitional period, because of the small potential and because management standards are low, the state-operated economy cannot play a guiding role. They said that during this stage, we must create the conditions and environment to enable the state enterprises to develop to the point where they can play a guiding role.

A few said that during this stage, it is not necessary to ask whether the state-operated economy plays a guiding role. Because the state economy is just an economic form,

there is nothing substantial about it. It is not the goal of socialism but only the means to develop a planned commodity economy. Thus, any form and means can be used to advance to socialism in the quickest and most effective way depending on the managerial capabilities of the socialist state.

2. Why did the state economic sector fail to manifest its guiding role in the economy during the past period?

Those attending the debate gave a variety of reasons:

Because the "comforting" state subsidies mechanism accustomed the state economy to an ineffective work style.

Because even though some of the fetters of the state enterprises were removed, the enterprises were still imprisoned by "bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies (because the major shortcomings in the macro management of the state had not been overcome). As a result, the enterprises couldn't move or respond to the needs of the commercial mechanism.

Because the state ownership mechanism with respect to the means of production still had problems. The real owner of the state enterprises has not been clearly determined.

Some said that the vagueness of the concept of "collective ownership" has resulted in the state enterprises becoming "ownerless" enterprises.

While debating these questions, a number of people stressed that there are many highly talented directors in the state economic elements. If the "fetters" are removed and they are allowed to act "freely" as in other economic elements, they have the ability to ensure that the state enterprises develop just as much as the private enterprises.

3. What can be done to ensure that the state economy plays a guiding role?

In general, those attending the debate agreed that the state economy must maintain only the key sectors—the percentage does not need to be large—with a suitable scale depending on each sector. The important problem is that it must manifest its technical advantages, increase productivity, quality, and results, and actively unite and lead the other economic elements so that they develop in accord with socialist guidelines. Some people were more specific, saying that the state enterprises must gain the trust of customers and give attention to intelligence, commercial arts, and the art of using capital effectively.

One person said that if they want to play a guiding role, the state enterprises must be present in all the economic spheres, and they must account for a large percentage with a larger and larger scale.

4. Looking at the economic picture of the state economic sectors during the first months of 1989, how should things be evaluated?

This is a burning question that was debated vigorously by those at the debate. Two different ideas were presented:

Almost all of those participating in the debate said that during the past months, the state has implemented a number of synchronized measures such as opposing state subsidies through prices and credit, strengthening macro control capabilities through reserve sources (grain, gold, and currency), raising the price of materials, calculating investments, increasing interest rates with the aim of preserving capital in order to attract the surplus funds of the people, and so on. All of these measures were necessary. This is good news, because it manifests a more resolute attitude on the path of switching from bureaucratic centralism and state subsidies to socialist business. The positive meaning of these measures is that they have exposed the weaknesses and ineffective aspects of the state economy that had long been concealed by the state subsidies. Even though the "medicine" of these measures was initially a little too strong (for example, interest rates on bank savings deposits were too high), we are gradually correcting things. A number of state enterprises are in a very difficult situation and may even go bankrupt. But that is nothing to be afraid of. In fact, this is necessary and must be accepted. The important problem is that we must maintain the measures implemented. Of course, they must be adjusted and supplemented in accord with the complex changes in the situation. Of those who expressed this opinion, some were optimistic about the present situation.

Contrary to the above idea, a number of people said that we have recently used rather strong measures (from extreme leftism to extreme rightism) to block the river's flow. Or put another way, we have used too strong a medicine to treat a sudden fever, and this has weakened the patient and damaged his heart. Those who held this opinion said that on the outside, the situation looks good, but in reality the state economy is in danger of stepping into an even more serious crisis. Or put differently, the state economy is facing a huge storm. The basis of the argument of these people is that even though the above measures have temporarily resulted in market prices dropping and stabilizing, we have fallen into a very alarming situation: production is stagnating in almost all the economic elements, and the state economy has been hit the hardest. Bank revenues have dropped seriously. Many of those who held this opinion were very pessimistic.

5. Should urgent measures be mentioned?

Almost all of those participating in the debate supported the 10 urgent solutions mentioned by the debate organizational committee. At the same time, they stressed the need to implement the urgent measures with the aim of contributing to overcoming the present burning difficulties. Because the ways of evaluating the state economic

situation during the past months were different as mentioned above, the urgent measures put forth were different, too. The two types of solutions can be integrated as follows:

Those who advocated the first type of urgent measures proposed the following four principles:

The solutions must aim at moving forward and switching the enterprises to cost accounting. There must not be any hesitation or a retreat to state subsidies and inflation as in the past.

If a solution is not equitable, sacrifices must be made in order to have a new and better mechanism.

We must be prudent but resolute when it has been clearly determined that a movement, such as the current movement, is in accord with objective laws.

Economics must be coordinated with politics, the central central echelon must be coordinated with the localities, and domestic affairs must be coordinated with foreign affairs in implementing solutions.

Based on the above principles, there are five urgent solutions:

1. The state, the collectives, and the laborers must bear the loss of a number of assets and some capital. And in order to sell the stagnant commodities, prices must be lowered to a level acceptable to the markets. If necessary, a number of products must be destroyed and used as raw materials for other products.

2. Interest rates must be kept high. (They must then be lowered gradually to a rational level.) This is because high interest rates are a powerful tool that can be used to force enterprise directors to engage in commercial activities and make effective use of the capital.

3. Give bids and lower property levels: Preliminary classifications must be made, and a number of enterprises that the state is aiding must be selected in to order maintain them and expand production. At the same time, enterprises that have lost their reason for being must be dissolved. The means of production must be sold (if they can no longer be used profitably) to private individuals. This money can then be used to renovate technology. The enterprises must be encouraged to work together closely to help them survive and expand without posing a heavy burden on the state.

4. The surplus labor can be dealt with in three ways:

Strengthen doing processing for other countries.

Increase the export of laborers from the present level of 200,000 people to approximately 1 million people, correct the irrational points in the agreements, and renovate the management mechanism with the aim of increasing budget revenues.

Open domestic services, including travel services, in order to provide jobs and increase budget revenues.

Expand industry and small industry and handicrafts in the rural areas and expand varied commercial activities at the enterprises. These are important guidelines that do not require much capital and that can be implemented immediately.

5. Open the door and solve the problem of foreign commodities flooding the country:

Foreign commodities flooding the country is the second whip, along with high interest rates, that can be used against enterprise directors to force domestic production enterprises to strive to improve technology and improve the quality of their products. If this door is shut completely, this will mean a return to state subsidies and it will be impossible to switch the enterprises to cost accounting. The important problem is that although this door must be opened, how wide it is opened depends on state control. We cannot use administrative measures in order to keep out imports. Instead, the flow of imports must be restricted using tariffs. Tariffs can be increased to 50-70 percent, and in the case of certain types of goods, the import duty can be set at 300 percent, not 30 percent as at present.

If these two levers (high interest rates and the import of foreign goods) are used appropriately and rationally, this will stimulate the enterprises to switch to cost accounting, constantly increase productivity, and improve quality and results. This will also increase budget revenues, control inflation, and increase the purchasing power of the dong. If because of rightist deviations we abandon one or both of these levers, there will be a return to state subsidies, and the country will not make any progress.

The second type of urgent solution:

- a. Continue to reduce interest rates to a rational level, ensure that the savings deposits of the people are mobilized, and provide loans in order to stimulate production.

- b. Reduce the price of materials, handle investments, and stabilize exchange rates.

- c. To generate buying power and enable the people to pay their debts, the first thing is to stimulate the rural markets. This also means stimulating demand from the agriculture sector or increasing the purchasing power of the peasants and gradually closing the gap between the price of agricultural products and industrial products (lowering the price of industrial goods and increasing the price of agricultural products).

- d. Immediately promulgate a domestic commodities support policy, revamp the tariff barriers, limit and tax a number of imported commodities, and implement policies to encourage the use of domestic goods.

- e. Handle the surplus labor forces through the efforts of the enterprises with the active support of the state. Suitable policies must be implemented with respect to

the laborers in the process of adjusting the property structure in the state economic sector.

Implement suitable policies with respect to retired people.

Immediately establish an aid fund in order to provide short-term help to those who are not yet working or who have not yet found a job. For now, they can be provided with a minimum of 13 kg of rice a month.

f. Adjust the control apparatus, particularly finance and banking, in order to increase budget revenues and make it possible to implement the measures in a synchronized manner.

6. Can the state enterprises be classified? By what standards should they be classified, and who will classify them?

As for whether or not the enterprises should be classified, almost all of those participating in the debate said that the state enterprises must be classified in order to have appropriate measures for dealing with each type of enterprise.

Concerning classification standards, a number of people said that they did not agree with classifying the state enterprises simply on the basis of production results. They stressed that this must be based on the nature of the products. Based on this standard, the state enterprises can be divided into two types:

Type 1 includes those enterprises subordinate to sectors that produce special goods—such as those that print currency, generate electricity, produce goods to support national defense, and produce medicines—that other economic elements cannot produce. The state must maintain these enterprises, invest the best means available and develop progressive technical models, increase productivity and improve quality with respect to the principal products, and expand integrated commercial activities in order to increase revenues.

Type 2 consists of two types of enterprises:

a. Many state enterprises produce a product on the list of key products of the state economy that are related to many sectors and spheres. The state uses the contract ordering of goods form and can hold bids. These enterprises must be maintained as targets. If an enterprise makes it profitable, it can be kept, but if it suffers losses, it can be disbanded. The state must have sources of national reserves in order to maintain the target enterprises, because the survival of these enterprises will stimulate competition and eliminate monopolies.

b. The other types of enterprises (those whose products are not on the list of key products) can call for bids and lower the level of ownership somewhat.

Others said that classifying enterprises based on commercial production results must be related to classifying them by economic sector. If a sector is a key sector and

if the state must maintain a certain product, even if production is showing a loss, the state must implement a suitable capital and price mechanism and tax policy to enable these enterprise to survive and achieve stability.

As for who is to do the classifying, some said that if an agency or organization is allowed to do the classifying, there will necessarily be subjective pressures. Because of this, the best way is to allow the enterprises to move forward on the markets. The market is the place to arrange and classify the enterprises in an objective way (including selecting and disbanding enterprises).

7. Are there echelons above the state enterprises, and if so, who are they?

Many of the people participating in the debate said that the state enterprises are a cell of the economy. They produce in accord with market needs. Their targets are the consumers, and their objective is to make the highest profits possible. The only "echelon" above the enterprises is the law. The enterprises are free to deal in goods allowed by the law. Because of this, there is no need to have a managerial ministry to manage commercial production. "Major surgery" must be performed in order to eliminate the symbiotic relationship between the state apparatus and the commercial managerial functions of the enterprises.

Those agreeing with this idea said that the time has come to withdraw those ministries, sectors, general departments, and federations that are not needed and that are obstructing the enterprises.

Others said that production in our country is commodity production that has been planned in accord with socialist guidelines. Because of this, there is no way to avoid talking about the management role of the state with respect to state enterprises. The question is how to separate the economic management functions of the state from the commercial management functions of the enterprises. Because we have not clearly determined the management functions of the state apparatus or promulgated laws on the economic policies, we should not eliminate the managerial ministries. And it is essential to maintain a number of general departments, corporations, and federations in order to guide and manage the development of the enterprises in accord with the plans of the state.

8. A question that is of particular theoretical and practical importance is how to solve the problem of socialist ownership.

Most of those participating in the debate said that this is a very complex theoretical question. Our fraternal socialist countries are very confused about this, too.

As an initial answer to this question, many people said that the important thing is to distinguish between the functions of the representative master (meaning the state) and those of the specific masters (meaning the directors and laborers at the enterprises). A distinction

must be made between ownership rights and the right to use the means of production.

Those who opposed the above ideas said that if we continue to adhere to the old viewpoint and regard property as belonging to the state, with the directors and labor collectives being the users, no matter how hard we try, we will never be able to overcome the conflicts within the socialist system of ownership.

Thus, the basic problem is to switch to another form of ownership. These people suggested:

1. There must be a real change in ownership. We do things halfway. It is essential that we shift to a corporate form.

2. State ownership must gradually be reduced. Eventually, it must account for only a certain percentage (one person said that in our country's present conditions, the state economy should not own more than 25 percent). We must implement real cost accounting.

The above are a number of problems about which people have different ideas. These must be studied more in order to clarify the issues.

This debate showed that solving the theoretical problems concerning the socialist system of ownership is closely related to solidifying and developing the state economy, the guiding element of the state economy on the path to socialism. The debate also showed that formulating a socioeconomic strategy for the country will have an important effect on developing the state economy and generate important economic effects. The debate stressed improving state economic management, organizing things rationally in the enterprises, improving

commercial arts, increasing the velocity of capital, giving attention to intelligence and skilled workers, gradually improving the equipment and machinery, and distributing revenues correctly based on resolving the relationship between the various interests correctly. But regardless of their viewpoint, everyone emphasized that the pressing problems that must be solved immediately include taking action concerning stagnant commodities, creating capital for the enterprises, and solving the price problem (particularly the price of materials), the tax and surplus labor problems, the problem concerning import policies (including protecting domestic production in the face of the flood of foreign imports), and the problem of expanding product distribution markets, with most markets being in the rural areas.

Concerning the commercial conditions and environment, the debate did not go deeply into academic problems but stressed that of all the factors that make up the commercial environment, the most important is markets. Many people agreed that our country does not have a market in the real sense of the word (in particular, we lack a labor market).

Almost all of those participating in the debate basically agreed with the 10 urgent solutions proposed by the debate organizational committee based on more than 40 plans submitted by agencies, research institutes, and scientists. At the same time, they mentioned many other ideas stressing that the basic solutions must be coordinated well and synchronized with the urgent solutions. And each person, depending on his own views, stressed the special importance of this or that solution. All of this resulted in the debate providing a basis for formulating a rational plan that can contribute actively to rescuing the present state economy and helping it to advance.

Thoughts on the Structural Revolution

902E01121 Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese
No 7, Jul 89 pp 79-81

[Letter by Le Linh, High-Level Military Academy]

[Text] After reading the article "The Structural Revolution, a Pressing Requirement of Renovation" by Nguyen Huu Tho, which was printed in the March 1989 issue of TAP CHI CONG SAN, I have a few thoughts on this that I would like to contribute.

This article by Nguyen Huu Tho mentioned many large problems concerning the structural revolution that will require much study and time before they can be solved. Here, I would like to mention several aspects concerning this revolution.

During several decades of arduous warfare against the invaders, the communist party led our people in winning independence and freedom for the nation and created a basis for democracy to satisfy the social and economic development needs of the country. This great victory excited everyone and gave them great confidence in the party's leadership. Entering the stage of socialist construction, when the people elected leaders, they relied on this confidence. This was like a necessity, like a natural instinct. Few of the voters were really concerned about their responsibility in selecting their representatives. Few voters demanded the information necessary to analyze and weigh things when voting. In reality, no one dared run for office, manifest a spirit of ownership, or shoulder the country's work. Those elected to the party and state organizations usually acted "modestly" and waited for the attention of the organization. After being assigned tasks came a period of solidifying their position. They did not rush to carry out the work or make preparations to deal with the difficulties and challenges of the situation. As for organization, the leaders were fond of using "yes men" and did not encourage people to be dynamic or bold and dare to carry out their responsibilities to society and life. In general, people were still passive in their thinking. They relied on others and trusted and submitted to others in a childlike manner.

The vague and incorrect viewpoints on leadership and management (including economic and social management) and on the functions of the party and state led to many errors in practical activities. A huge and unwieldy leadership and management apparatus was built. This apparatus was unscientific and unsynchronized, and it was weak and ineffective. Over the years, efforts were made to repair this apparatus, but this just created new and more serious conflicts. The localism, disorganization, anarchy, and other disruptions in management made the socioeconomic situation more and more complex.

There are still many different ideas about democracy throughout society. We have not yet found the correct answers in order to reconcile the dialectical relationship

between democracy and centralism. Democracy is usually still very formal in nature, and in some places it is too open and loose, which has resulted in democracy getting out of hand. Centralization has at times been too restricting and absolute. At other times, it has been very arbitrary and loose. These conditions have led to a loss of solidarity. The masses have lost confidence, and social discipline has been weakened. Party activities have become more administrative, the state has become more bureaucratic, and the mass social organizations have been formalized. That is a general picture of today's mechanism. Thus, the structural revolution is in fact a pressing requirement of the renovation movement.

But where should this structural revolution begin? I think that this must begin with renovating the thinking and viewpoints of every person and organization concerning the contents of the structural revolution. Everyone must understand the social spheres and social organization and management. They must understand the relationship between democracy and the law, the organizational structure of a power organization, and the way to elect a power organization in order to ensure democracy.

Even a seemingly simple matter such as tradition can, if not clarified, lead to people holding a wide variety of views. Every country has its own national and legal traditions, wonderful traditions that must be maintained and respected, and corrupt practices, remnants of small-scale production, and backward elements that must be eliminated. For example, a special tradition of Vietnamese society is that village relationships are very strong. The village is like a small society where class and family relationships are kept concealed behind bamboo hedges. "Imperial power bends to suit rural customs" is regarded as a behavioral guideline in every activity. Today, we must clarify what is and what is not suitable with respect to village relationships. How should we deal with the various rules that still exist at this level? How should responsibilities and tasks be assigned in order to eliminate the distortions in leadership relationships and end the situation in which we are led according to the guideline "the storekeeper is bigger than the chief?"

We must change the way people think about the new society, the socialist society. That is a progressive and civilized society in which the level of socialization is continually rising. That society must be tightly organized in order to manifest fully the powers of the people, develop the economy and society, and bring happiness to the people.

Solving the problem of understanding and viewpoint is the leading factor. This is extremely important in order to enter the structural revolution and ensure that this revolution is successful. Because it is a revolution, there will be losses, and sacrifices will have to be made. We must struggle resolutely and bear the pain when necessary. But revolution is also a process. We must handle things step by step. We can't be impatient or skip a stage, particularly in our country's present situation (many

shortcomings regarding the socioeconomic situation and man). It may take several elections before we perfect the new mechanism. Finally, the revolution is the work of the masses. We must rely on the masses, do things through the masses, and conduct experiments in real life. The masses will learn useful lessons and arrive at accurate and scientific conclusions concerning the form of the new mechanism.

Separating Ownership Rights From the Right To Exploit the Means of Production

902E0112J Hanoi TAP CHI CONG SAN in Vietnamese No 7, Jul 89 pp 81-83

[Letter by Tran Kien, Hanoi]

[Test] In Vietnam and the other fraternal socialist countries, for a long time, a special characteristic of the economic management system has been a high degree of centralization. We have just realized that once a socialist country is based on public ownership of the means of production, the state apparatus must participate directly in the commercial activities of the enterprises. The system of social ownership of the means of production and state economic management contain a latent danger, the danger of "alienating the masses from the ownership and management system. A concrete manifestation of this is the growth of bureaucratic centralism on one hand and social passivity on the other. The effects of this conflict have multiplied rapidly. Thus, it is urgent that this conflict be resolved as quickly as possible."¹ This also requires that we renovate and reorganize every sphere of social life, particularly economic management.

The time has come to change viewpoints on the socialist economy in general and on the relationship between ownership rights and the right to make (commercial) use of the means of production in particular. The lessons of the past can help us understand a useful point: the owners of the means of production are not necessarily the ones who make commercial use of these means of production. The owners can allow others to represent them if this is felt to be necessary and profitable.

We know that ownership of the means of production is of decisive importance, but ownership rights are not the entire contents of the ownership system. The ownership system also includes use rights (that is, commercial rights) with respect to the means of production. Thus, "ownership" rights are an asset relationship showing how "things" are legally dependent on the owners. Commercial "use" rights refer to a distribution and use of the means of production and labor. Along with the production socialization process and the different levels of development of the commodity economy, "use" rights and "commercial" rights can be unified in one subject, or they can be separated from each other.

In the history of the socioeconomic development of mankind, there has long been a separation between ownership rights and commercial rights. In feudal society, the economy was primarily a natural economy.

The peasants were tenant farmers who worked the fields of the landlords. That was the earliest form of separating ownership rights from commercial rights. With the appearance of leasing and rent collection, the peasants became relatively independent in the use of their labor (both necessary labor and surplus labor). This generated an interest in labor. That was also a factor in promoting the gradual expansion of feudal production. However, the landlord class also used this point to increase their exploitation of the peasants, and feudal ground rents gradually increased. With the appearance of capitalist society, along with an ever higher level of production socialization, the division of social labor expanded, and the commercial management of the enterprises became a special activity separate from productive labor and separate from the ownership rights of the capitalists. In particular, along with the growth of the commodity-currency relationship and the expansion of credit and the corporate economy, the separation between ownership rights and commercial rights became a widespread economic phenomenon.

This separation between ownership rights and commercial rights in capitalist society is manifested in two forms. One is complete separation. For example, a financial capitalist transfers his capital to an industrial capitalist for a certain amount of income. He does not interfere in the production or commercial activities of the industrial capitalist. The second form is one of less than total separation. For example, in a corporation, the capitalists establish a board of directors. The board's task is to set investment and expansion guidelines. The specific production and business tasks are entrusted to a general director, a type of high-level employee. The task of this person is to make effective use of the means of production and manpower in order to earn the maximum income possible for the enterprise or corporation.

We don't deny the advantages of all-people ownership or socialist collective ownership of the means of production. These advantages allow us to manage the economy in a unified and planned manner and to eliminate exploitation of people by other people. But to this we must add new management factors in order to stimulate the production installations and ensure that the units have the right to select leaders and choose economic solutions that will benefit them the most when using the means of production at their installations.

These active factors will appear once we separate ownership rights from commercial rights to the means of production and give the enterprises and production units and the groups and laborers skilled in management freedom in carrying on commercial production activities so that they can produce many products for society.

Naturally, separating ownership rights from commercial rights within the socialist system is completely different from doing this within the capitalist system, because in a capitalist society, the capitalists entrust huge sums of their money to the directors, who have management skills and who are responsible for making effective use of

the money in order to earn much surplus value for the capitalists, the masters. But in a socialist system, it is the state that gives commercial rights to the production installations, collectives, and laborers so that they can produce many products for the collective and all of society.

Thus, in a socialist system, separating ownership rights from commercial rights will not harm the system of public ownership of the means of production. To the contrary, this will give this real economic content. The laborers will no longer be indifferent to the collective's means of production or to the commercial production activities as they were in the past. They will become the real masters of their enterprises and of their country. The state apparatus will no longer be deeply and unnecessarily involved in the administrative affairs of the enterprises and will be able to concentrate on guiding and regulating the economy on the macro level. As a result, the public-sector economy will be solidified and perfected and show its great vitality.

Of course, separating ownership rights from commercial rights under socialism is relative, because every economic activity of the production installations must be in accord with the requirements of national economic development and the interests of the laborers. Thus, after commercial rights and freedom have been given to the enterprises and to the laborers, the administrative apparatus will not be directly involved in managing the

commercial activities of the enterprises but must continue to monitor, guide, and regulate the enterprises using economic and administrative measures in order to ensure that the economic activities of the enterprises develop in accord with the national economic plans.

In recent years, the economic reforms in the fraternal countries and in Vietnam have moved in the direction of separating commercial rights from ownership rights to the means of production. This has been manifested in the following specific ways: The production enterprises have been given greater freedom and responsibility. Quotas have been given according to the group and laborers in agriculture. Enterprise, field, pond, garden, and water conservancy project contracts have been given. These new management forms have enabled the enterprises, cooperatives, and laborers to make effective use of the means of production for which they are responsible. The production installations are no longer as dependent on the state administrative apparatus as they once were, and they have become more flexible. As a result, the entire economy and all of society have become more active. Thus, separating ownership rights from commercial rights to the means of production is an objective requirement of economic and social development.

Footnote

1. L.I. Abankin, TAP CHI CONG SAN, June 1988, p 81

**A New Perspective on Capitalist Multinational
Corporations**

00000000 Hanoi *TAP CHI CONG SAN* in Vietnamese
No 7, July 89 pp 84-88

[Nguyen Khac Than; article not translated]